

10¢

NO. 418

Johnny Mack Brown

DELL
COMIC

NO. 618

10¢

Johnny Mack Brown





CAPT. HARRY WHEELER

Sheriff, Soldier and Arizona Ranger

HARRY C. WHEELER GREW UP AROUND ARMY POSTS. HIS FATHER WAS A COLONEL IN THE REGULAR ARMY AND BELONGED TO A LONG LINE OF DISTINGUISHED OFFICERS. WHEN IT BECAME TIME FOR HARRY TO ENTER WEST POINT, IT WAS FOUND THAT HE WAS NOT TALL ENOUGH TO MEET THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE MILITARY ACADEMY. HOWEVER, HIS LACK OF STATURE DIDN'T SEEM TO IMPAIR HIS ABILITY AS A FIGHTING MAN. WHEN IT CAME TO HOLDING UP HIS END IN A BRAWL, HARRY WHEELER WAS A REGULAR BUZZ SAW. THEY MADE HIM CHIEF OF THE APACHE SCOUTS AT FORT SILL, AND FOLKS WILL LOOK A LONG TIME BEFORE THEY'LL FIND A MORE CAPABLE FIGHTING CREW THAN THESE BOYS. HARRY SERVED AS A REGULAR SOLDIER IN THE

SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR. AFTER THE WAR HE DRIFTED INTO ARIZONA, WHERE HE JOINED THE ARIZONA RANGERS IN 1902. FOR THE NEXT FIFTEEN YEARS HE SERVED AS A RANGER, A DEPUTY, OR A SHERIFF. HE WAS KNOWN TO BE ABSOLUTELY FEARLESS, A DEAD SHOT, AND CHAIN LIGHTNING ON THE DRAW WITH A SIX-GUN. THEY TELL ABOUT THE TIME TRACY, THE OUTLAW, SHOT CAPTAIN WHEELER IN THE STOMACH AND IN THE FOOT. THE CAPTAIN DREW HIS GUN AND SHOT TRACY THREE TIMES THROUGH THE BODY BEFORE HE FELL. WHEELER WAS A CAPTAIN OF RANGERS WHEN THIS GREAT ORGANIZATION WAS DISBANDED IN 1909. DURING WORLD WAR ONE HE WAS AN OFFICER AND SAW ACTION IN EUROPE. HARRY WHEELER DIED IN 1925. HE WASN'T A VERY BIG PERSON BUT HE WAS A BRAVE MAN.



JOHNNY MACK BROWN

ⁱⁿ
**GOLD of the
ARIVAIPAS**

WELL, REUBEN,
GETTING READY FOR
ANOTHER PROSPECTING
TRIP UP THE
PECOS?

NOPE! THIS TIME
I'M GOIN' AFTER INJUN
BURIED TREASURE!
'TAIN'T TOO FAR
FROM HERE
EITHER!

ONE MORNING IN BLUE SANDS, JOHNNY
MACK BROWN GREETES AN OLD FRIEND ...

BETTER KEEP
YOUR VOICE DOWN,
REUBEN! SOME
FOLKS WOULD
STOP AT
NOTHING
TO GET IN
ON A DEAL
LIKE THAT!

HEBBE
SO!
BUT THEY'D
HAVE
A HARD TIME
READIN'
THE MAP
I'VE GOT!...

BINKY WATSON
HAD IT FOR A LONG
TIME AND COULDN'T
MAKE HEAD NOR TAIL
OF IT TILL A COUPLE
WEEKS AGO! BY THEN
HE WAS ON HIS
DEATHBED, AN'
IT WAS TOO LATE
TO DO ANYTHING
ABOUT IT!

SO JEST AFORE
HE DIED 'TOTHER DAY,
HE GAVE IT
TO ME!
HE DIDN'T GET A
CHANCE TO 'READ' IT
FOR ME, THOUGH!
I DID THAT ON
MY OWN!

YOU FIGURED
IT OUT?

YEP! I AIN'T LIVED
AROUND INJUNS ALL THESE
YEARS WITHOUT LEARNIN' HOW
TO READ THEIR SIGNS!
S'LONG, JOHNNY!

DELL COMICS ARE GOOD COMICS



Y'KNOW, I COULD SURE USE SOME O' THAT TREASURE!

ME, TOO! SUPPOSE WE GET OUR HORSES AND DO A LITTLE TRAILING!



A FEW MINUTES LATER...

SAY, GABE! INSTEAD OF FOLLOWIN' LANE TO THE TREASURE, WHY DON'T WE JUST TAKE THE MAP AWAY FROM HIM NOW?

THAT WOULD BE OKAY... EXCEPT FOR ONE THING! WE MIGHT NOT BE ABLE TO READ IT!



SEVERAL MILES OUT OF TOWN, GABE AND JOE GAIN A VANTAGE POINT...

LOOK! HE'S TURNING OFF ON THE OLD BISON CREEK TRAIL! LET'S GO!

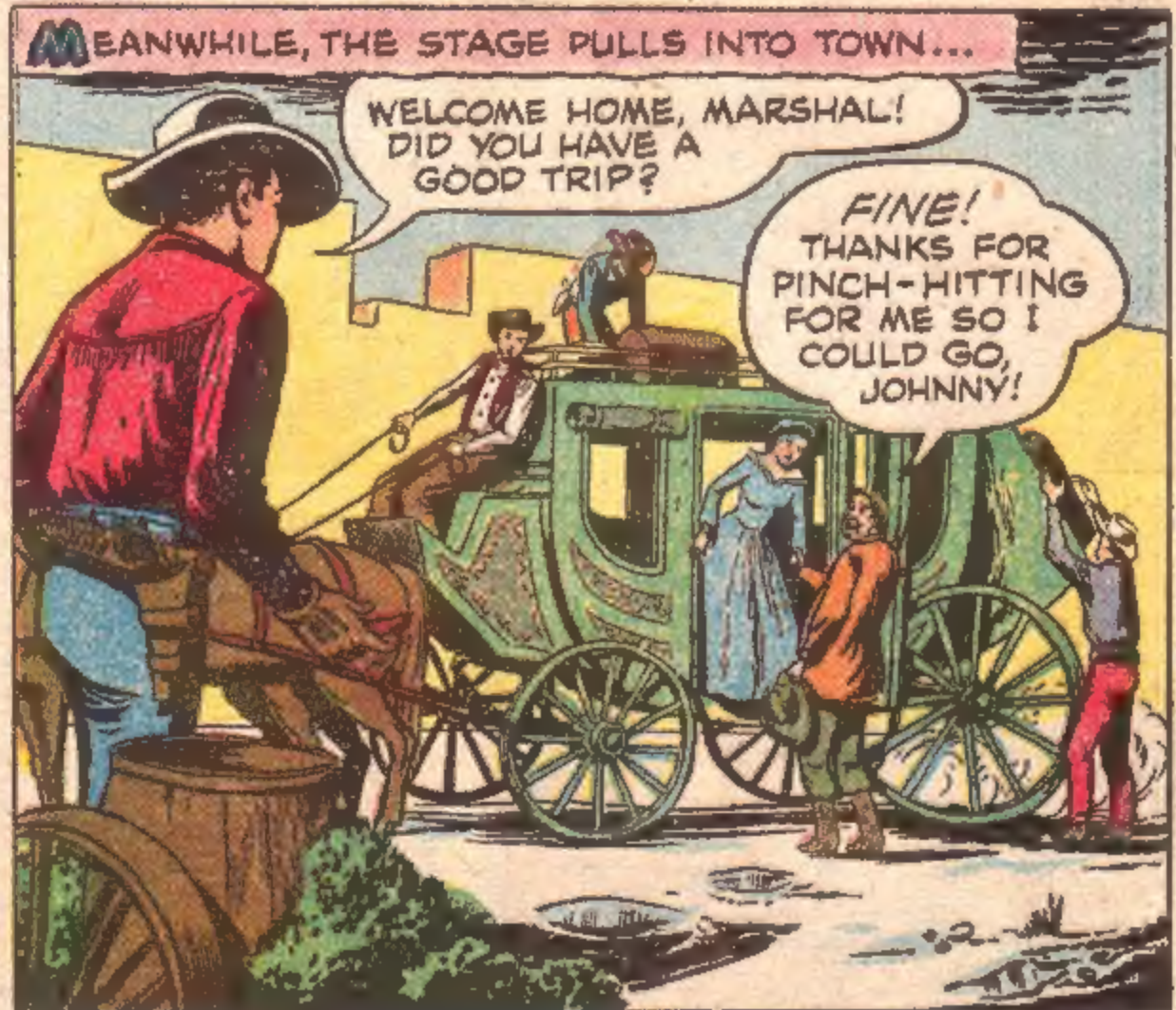
NO HURRY, JOE! LANE'S A SLOW WALKER! BESIDES, WE'D BETTER WAIT TILL THE STAGE HAS GONE BY!



LATER...

IT'S CLEAR NOW! LET'S GO!

WE'LL HAVE TO BE CAREFUL HE DOESN'T SPOT US!



MEANWHILE, THE STAGE PULLS INTO TOWN...

WELCOME HOME, MARSHAL! DID YOU HAVE A GOOD TRIP?

FINE! THANKS FOR PINCH-HITTING FOR ME SO I COULD GO, JOHNNY!

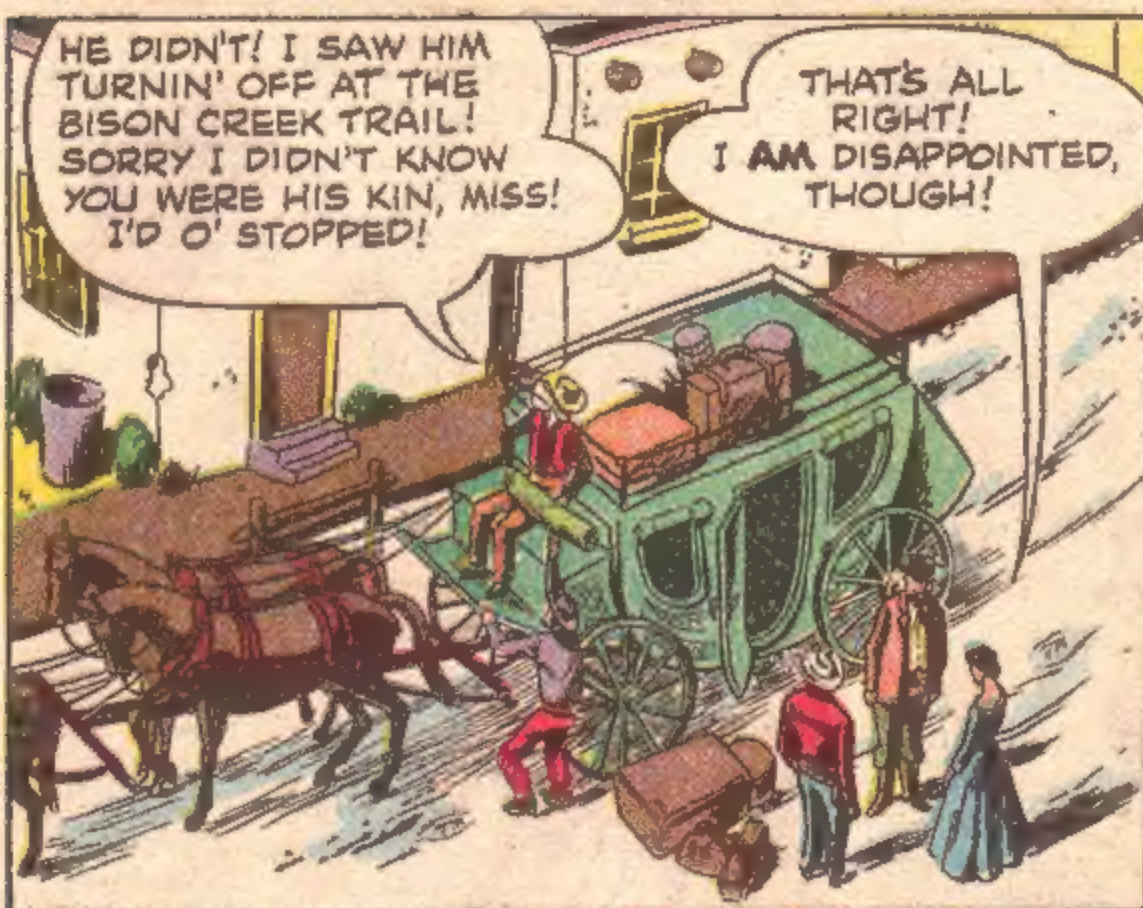


I WANT YOU TO MEET CELIA MOORE - REUBEN LANE'S GRANDDAUGHTER! COME FOR A SURPRISE VISIT! CELIA, THIS IS THE FAMOUS JOHNNY MACK BROWN!

HOW DO YOU DO, MISTER BROWN! DO YOU KNOW WHERE I CAN FIND GRAMPS?



NOT EXACTLY! HE HEADED EAST OUT OF TOWN ABOUT HALF AN HOUR AGO! YOU PROBABLY PASSED HIM... IF HE STUCK TO THE ROAD!



HE DIDN'T! I SAW HIM TURNIN' OFF AT THE BISON CREEK TRAIL! SORRY I DIDN'T KNOW YOU WERE HIS KIN, MISS! I'D O' STOPPED!

THAT'S ALL RIGHT! I AM DISAPPOINTED, THOUGH!



I'VE GOT AN IDEA, MISS CELIA! SUPPOSE YOU AND I RIDE AFTER HIM? I'LL GET YOU A HORSE!

THAT WOULD BE WONDERFUL! I'LL BE WITH YOU AS SOON AS I CHECK IN AT THE HOTEL AND CHANGE MY CLOTHES!

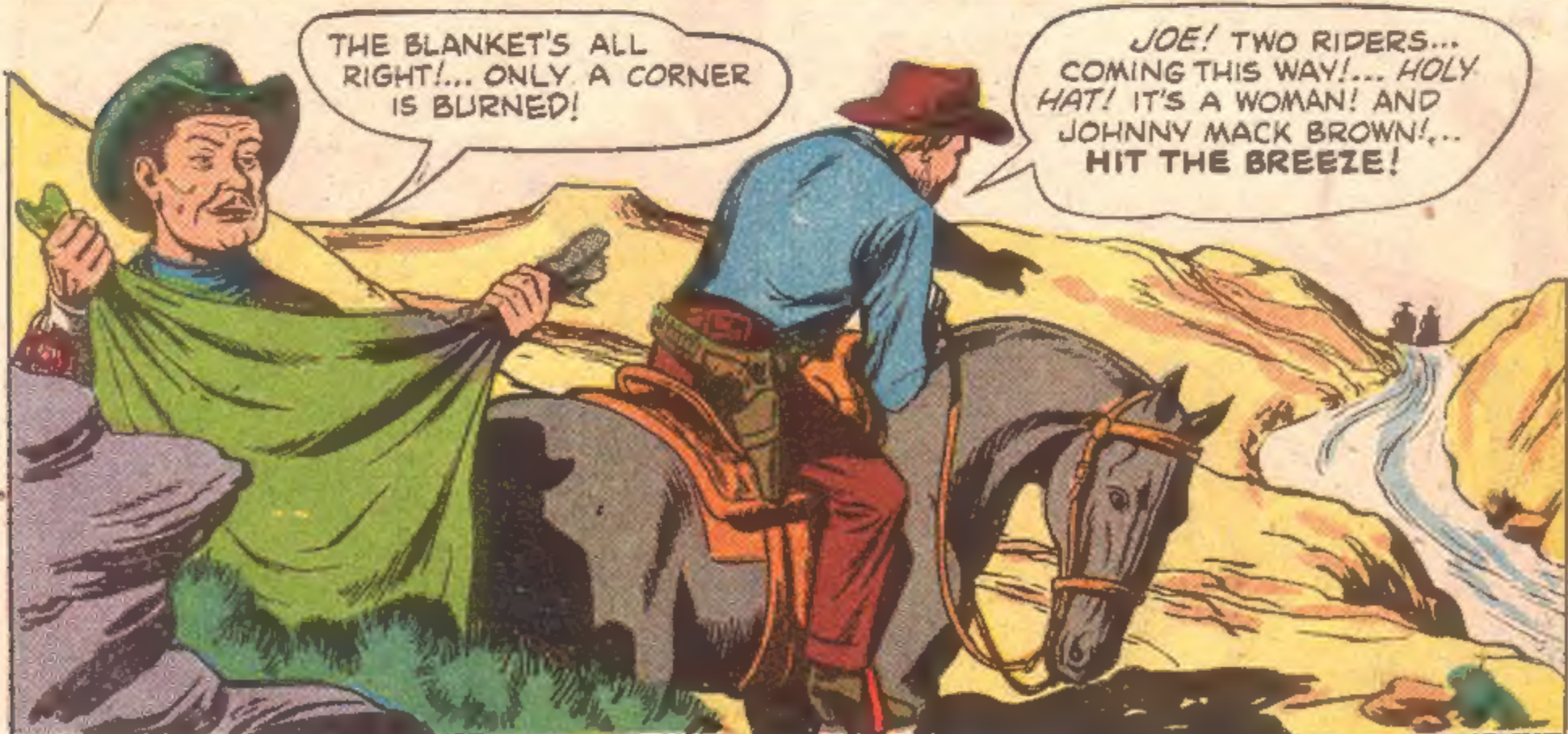


A LITTLE LATER ON BISON CREEK TRAIL...

OH-OH! LOOKS LIKE A COUPLA COYOTES'RE TRAILIN' ME! MUSTA HEERD ABOUT MY TREASURE MAP!



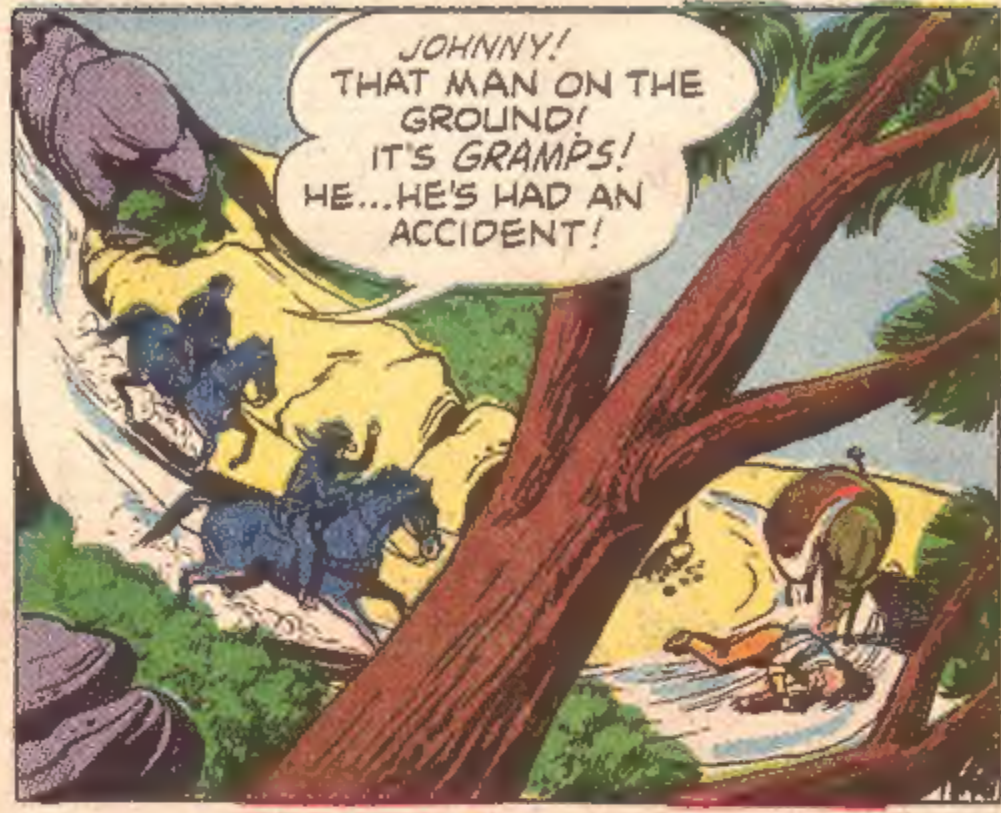
I'LL FOOL 'EM! I'LL BURN IT! I SHOULDA BURNED IT ANYWAYS... AS SOON AS I FIGURED IT OUT!





GABE! MAYBE LANE WAS FIRIN' THIS BLANKET TO THROW US OFF THE TRACK! MAYBE THE REAL MAP'S IN HIS POCKET!

IT'S TOO LATE TO SEARCH HIM NOW!



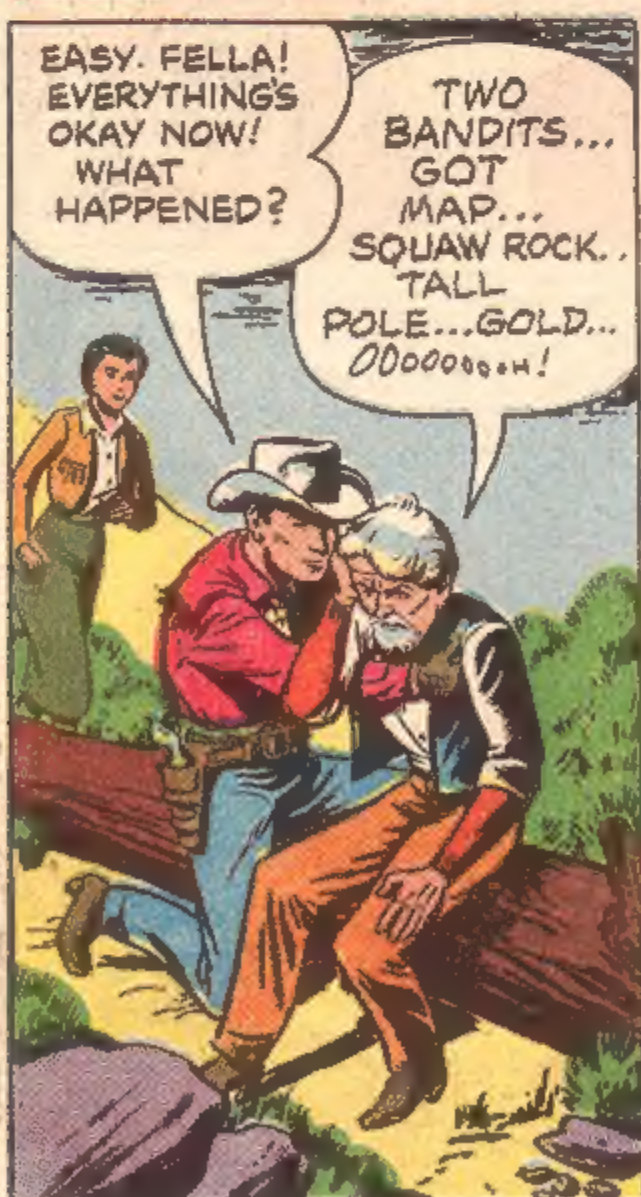
JOHNNY! THAT MAN ON THE GROUND! IT'S GRAMPS! HE...HE'S HAD AN ACCIDENT!



IS HE... DEAD?

NO! HE'S GOT A BAD CUT ON HIS HEAD AND... WAIT! HE'S COMING TO!

OH! HHH!



EASY. FELLA! EVERYTHING'S OKAY NOW! WHAT HAPPENED?

TWO BANDITS... GOT MAP... SQUAW ROCK... TALL POLE... GOLD... OOOOOOHH!



HE'S LOST CONSCIOUSNESS AGAIN! WHAT WAS HE TALKING ABOUT?

BURIED TREASURE AND A PAIR OF CROOKS! I'LL HEAD AFTER THEM AS SOON AS I SEE YOU HEADED FOR TOWN WITH HIM!



BUT MY LITTLE MARE CAN'T CARRY DOUBLE! HOW ON EARTH CAN I TAKE GRAMPS?

EASY!...I'LL BUILD AN INDIAN DRAG!

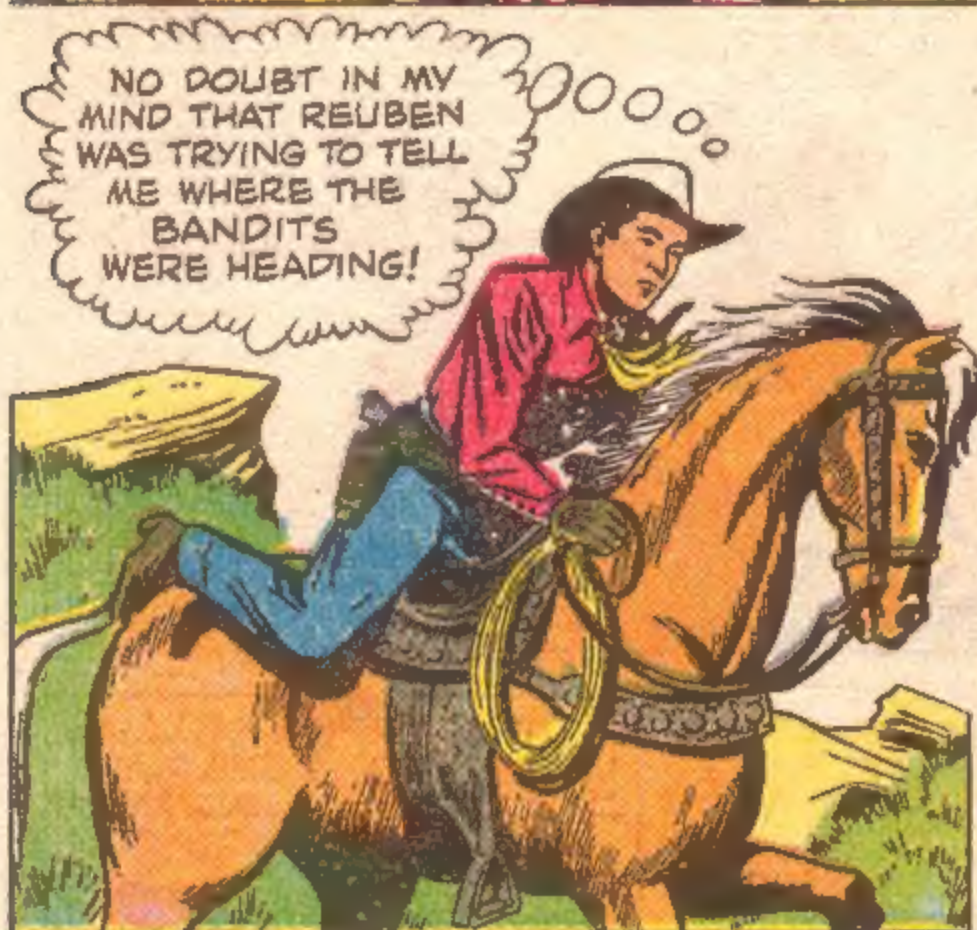
A SHORT TIME
LATER...

REUBEN MAY HAVE A
CONCUSSION, CELIA!
BETTER HEAD STRAIGHT
FOR THE DOCTOR'S!

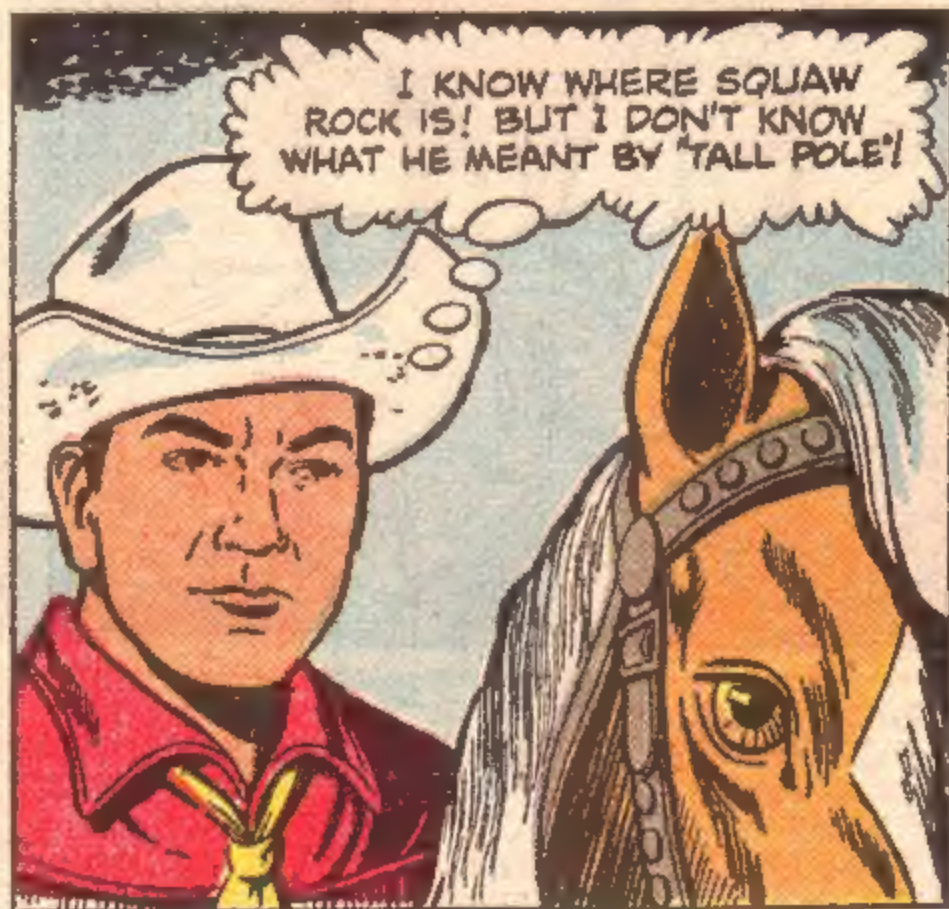
I WILL! AND, JOHNNY... PLEASE
BE CAREFUL! ANYBODY THAT
WOULD DO THIS TO A HELPLESS
OLD MAN WOULD DO
ANYTHING!



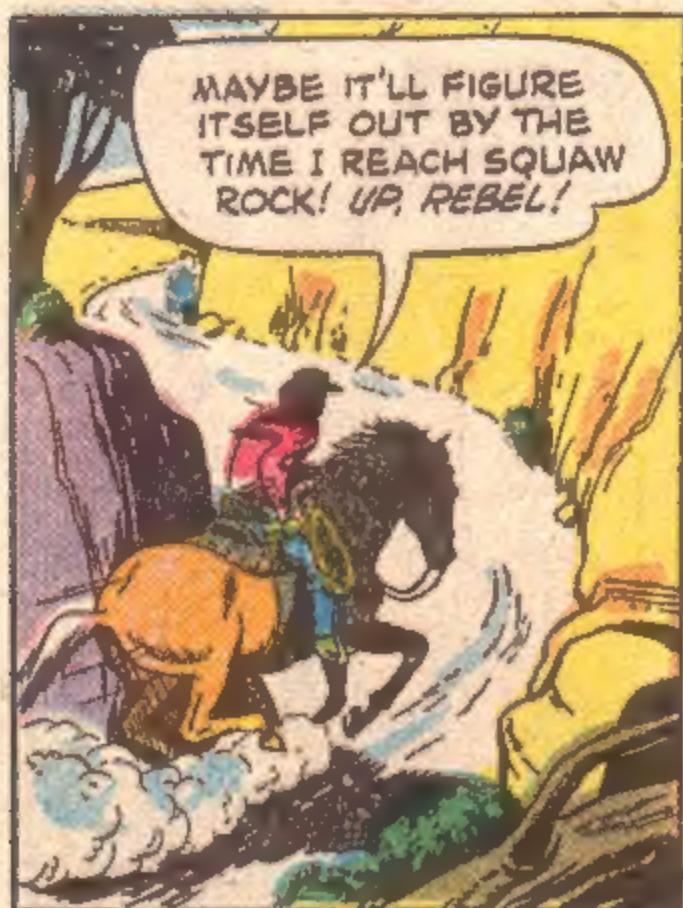
NO DOUBT IN MY
MIND THAT REUBEN
WAS TRYING TO TELL
ME WHERE THE
BANDITS
WERE HEADING!



I KNOW WHERE SQUAW
ROCK IS! BUT I DON'T KNOW
WHAT HE MEANT BY 'TALL POLE'!



MAYBE IT'LL FIGURE
ITSELF OUT BY THE
TIME I REACH SQUAW
ROCK! UP, REBEL!



MEANWHILE...

RECKON YOU WERE
RIGHT ABOUT THAT BLANKET
BEING A TRICK, JOE! I DON'T
SEE ANYTHING ON IT
THAT LOOKS LIKE
A MAP!

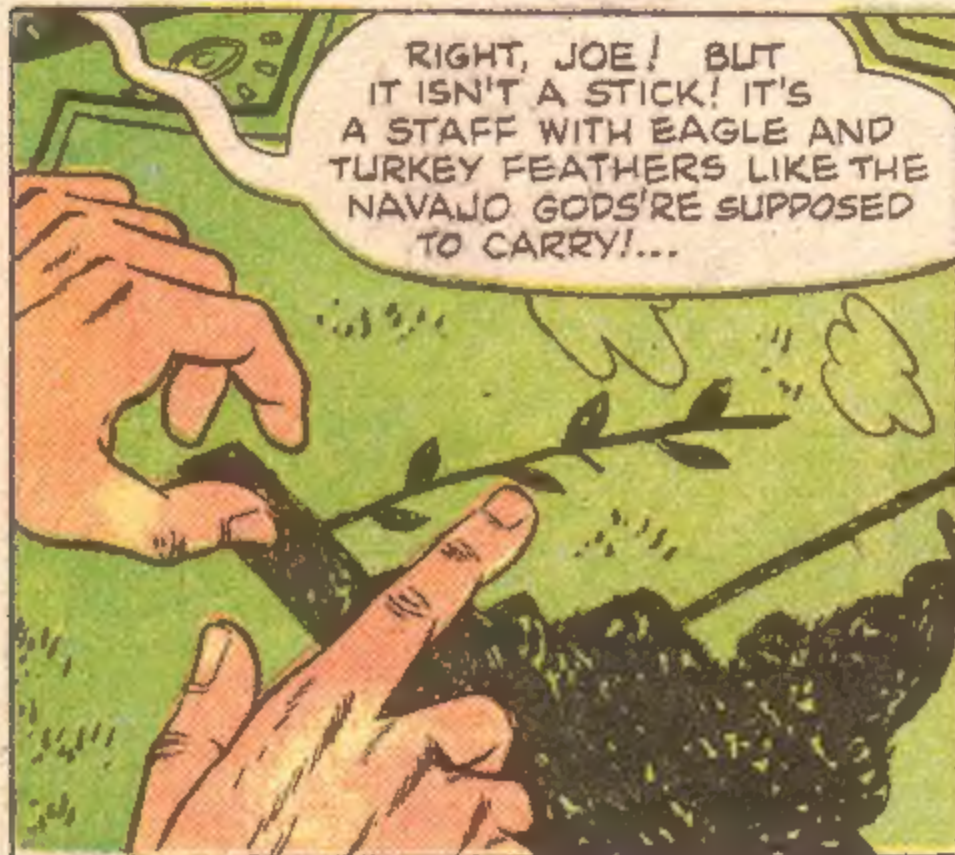




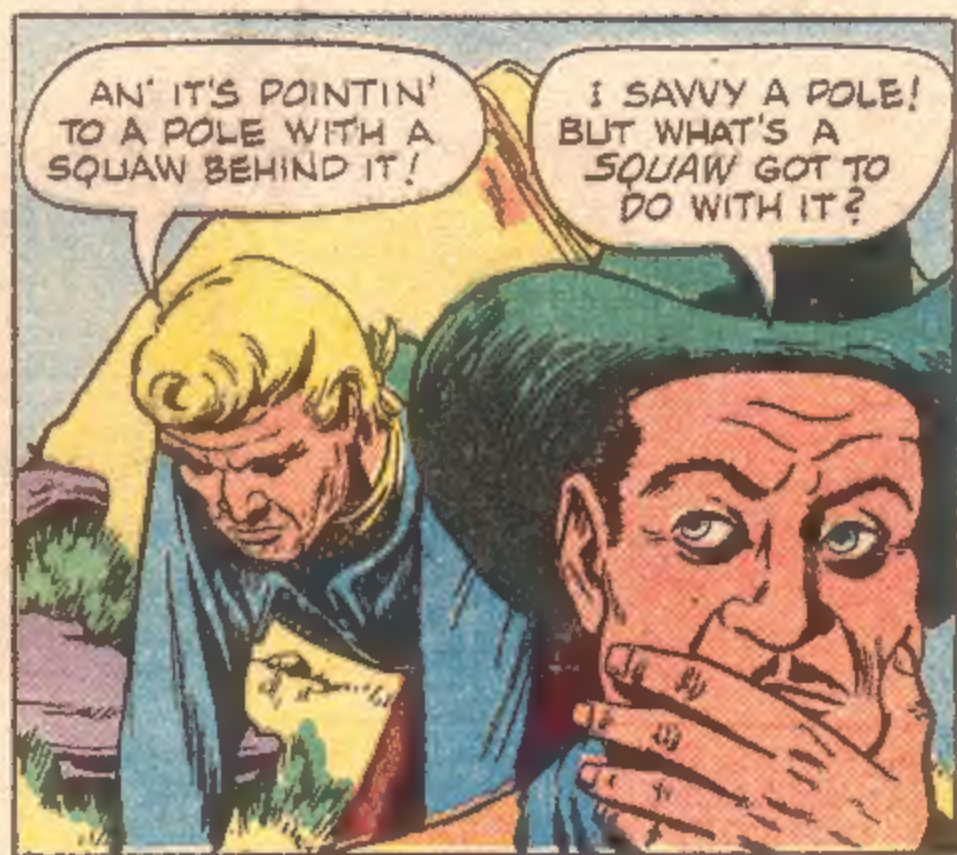
IT WOULDN'T LOOK LIKE A MAP, GABE! THOSE INJUNS WERE REAL SMART! THEY WORKED THEIR SECRETS IN AS PART OF THE DESIGN!



HMMM... THIS STICK WITH THE WIGGLY THINGS ON IT IS TILTED! LIKE IT WAS POINTING TO SOMETHING!

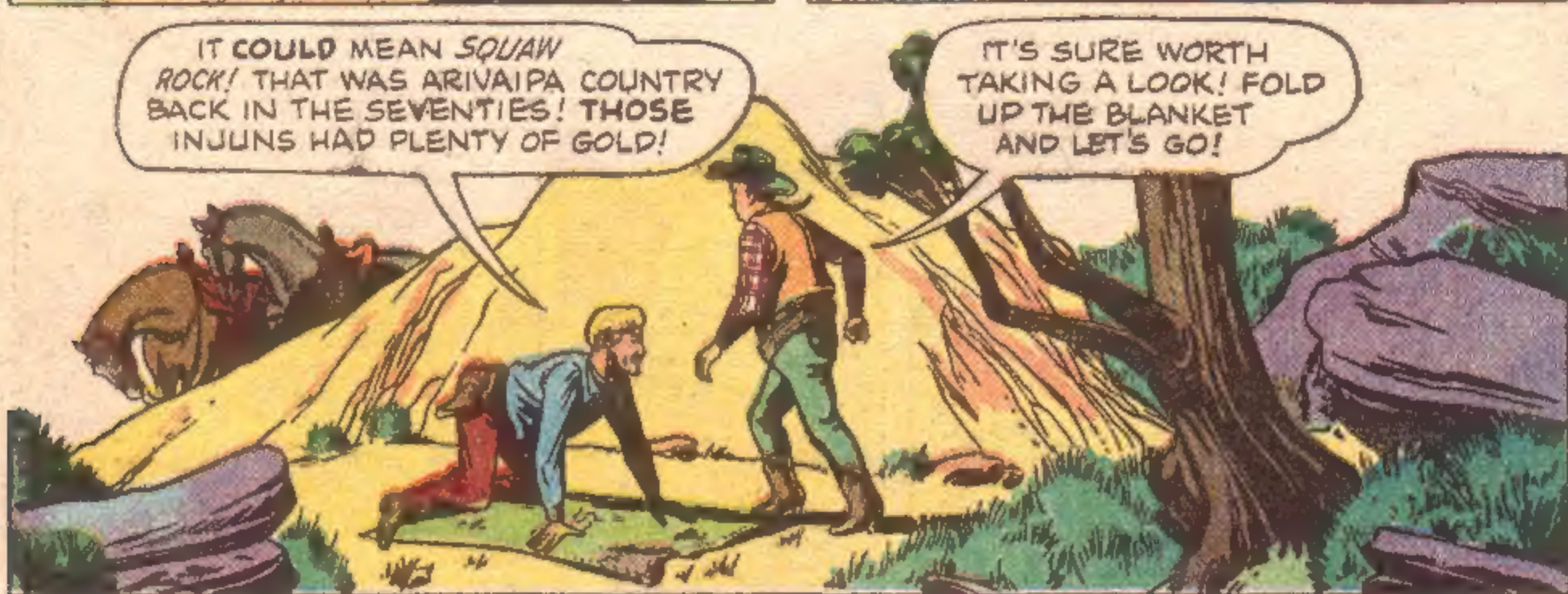


RIGHT, JOE! BUT IT ISN'T A STICK! IT'S A STAFF WITH EAGLE AND TURKEY FEATHERS LIKE THE NAVAJO GODS'RE SUPPOSED TO CARRY!...



AN' IT'S POINTIN' TO A POLE WITH A SQUAW BEHIND IT!

I SAVVY A POLE! BUT WHAT'S A SQUAW GOT TO DO WITH IT?



IT COULD MEAN SQUAW ROCK! THAT WAS ARIVAIPA COUNTRY BACK IN THE SEVENTIES! THOSE INJUNS HAD PLENTY OF GOLD!

IT'S SURE WORTH TAKING A LOOK! FOLD UP THE BLANKET AND LET'S GO!

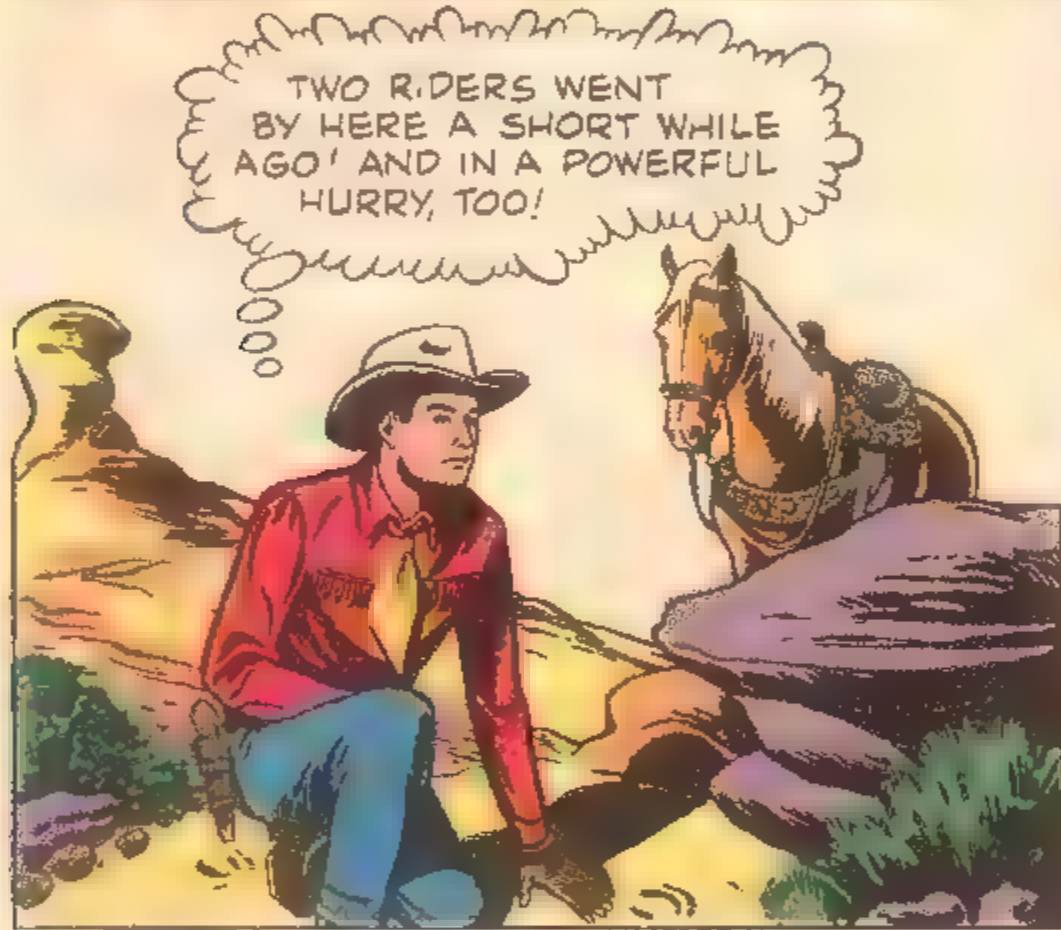
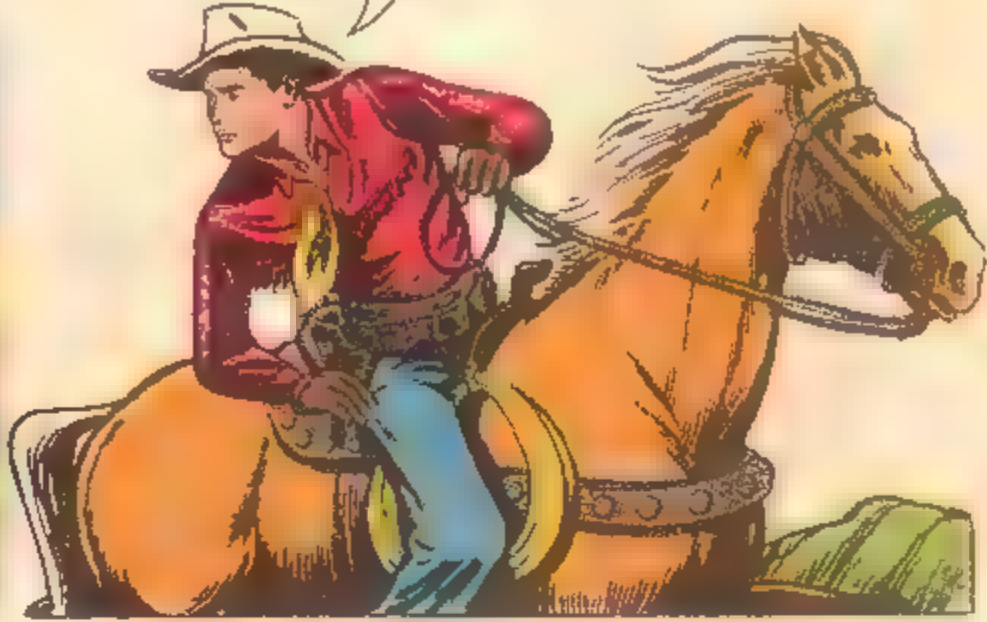


GABE! I JUST THOUGHT... IF BROWN SPOTTED OUR TRACKS, WE'LL BE HOT ON OUR TRAIL BY NOW!

DON'T WORRY! HEAD STRAIGHT FOR BISON CREEK! WE'LL THROW HIM OFF BY RIDING IN THE WATER ALMOST TO SQUAW ROCK!

TAKING A SHORT CUT TO SQUAW ROCK, JOHNNY SUDDENLY REINS IN...

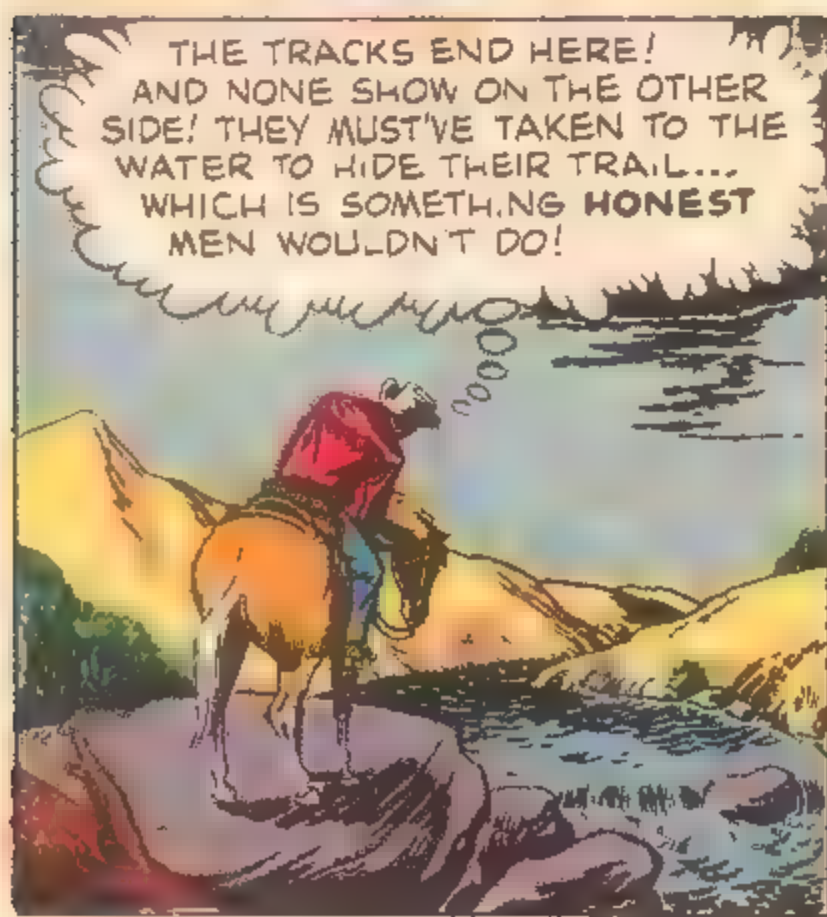
HOLD IT, REBEL! THOSE ARE FRESH HOOFPRINTS!



TWO RIDERS WENT BY HERE A SHORT WHILE AGO! AND IN A POWERFUL HURRY, TOO!



BISON CREEK RUNS NEAR SQUAW ROCK! SO THESE RIDERS COULD BE THE HOMBRES WHO SLUGGED REUBEN!



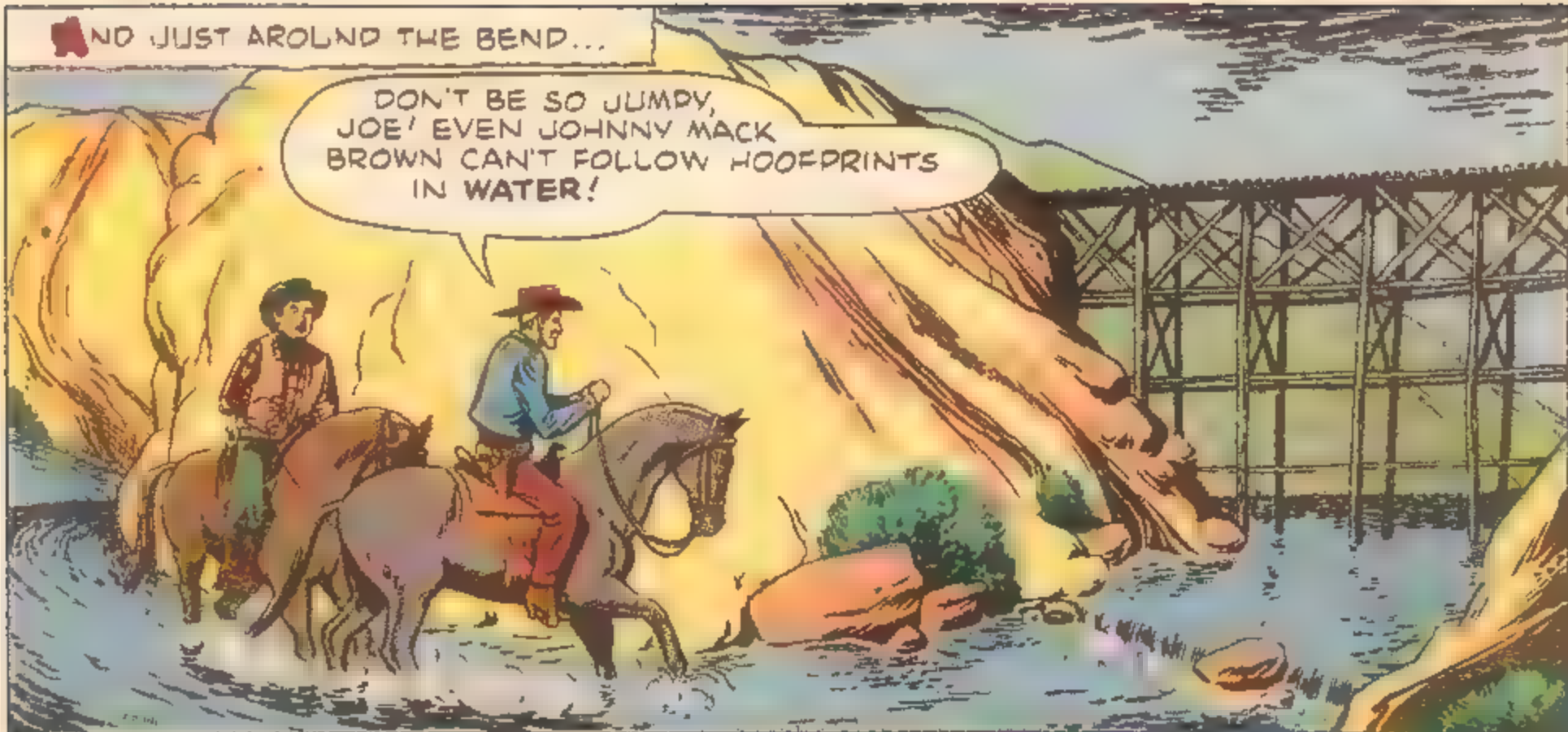
THE TRACKS END HERE! AND NONE SHOW ON THE OTHER SIDE! THEY MUST'VE TAKEN TO THE WATER TO HIDE THEIR TRAIL... WHICH IS SOMETHING HONEST MEN WOULDN'T DO!



I MUST BE ON THE RIGHT TRACK! SQUAW ROCK'S NOT TOO FAR BEYOND THAT BEND YONDER!

AND JUST AROUND THE BEND...

DON'T BE SO JUMPY,
JOE! EVEN JOHNNY MACK
BROWN CAN'T FOLLOW HOOFPRIENTS
IN WATER!



SAYS YOU! LOOK! THERE'S
BROWN NOW ROUNDIN' THE BEND!
HOW IN BLAZES DID HE GET ON
OUR TRAIL SO FAST?

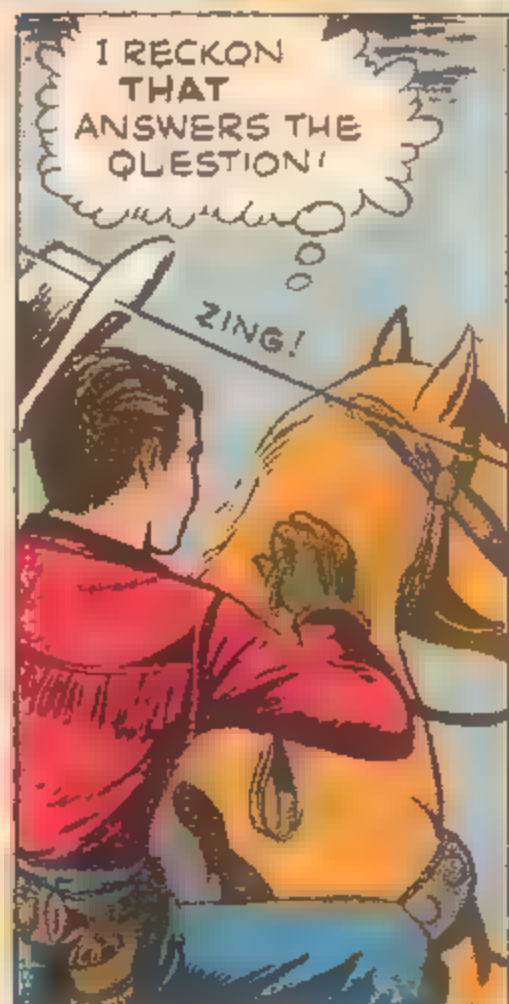
I DON'T KNOW!..
GET UNDER THE
TRESTLE! QUICK!
HE'S TOO GOOD A
SHOT TO SWAP LEAD
WITH OUT IN THE
OPEN!



TWO RIDERS!
I WONDER IF THEY
COULD BE THE
PAIR
I'M AFTER?

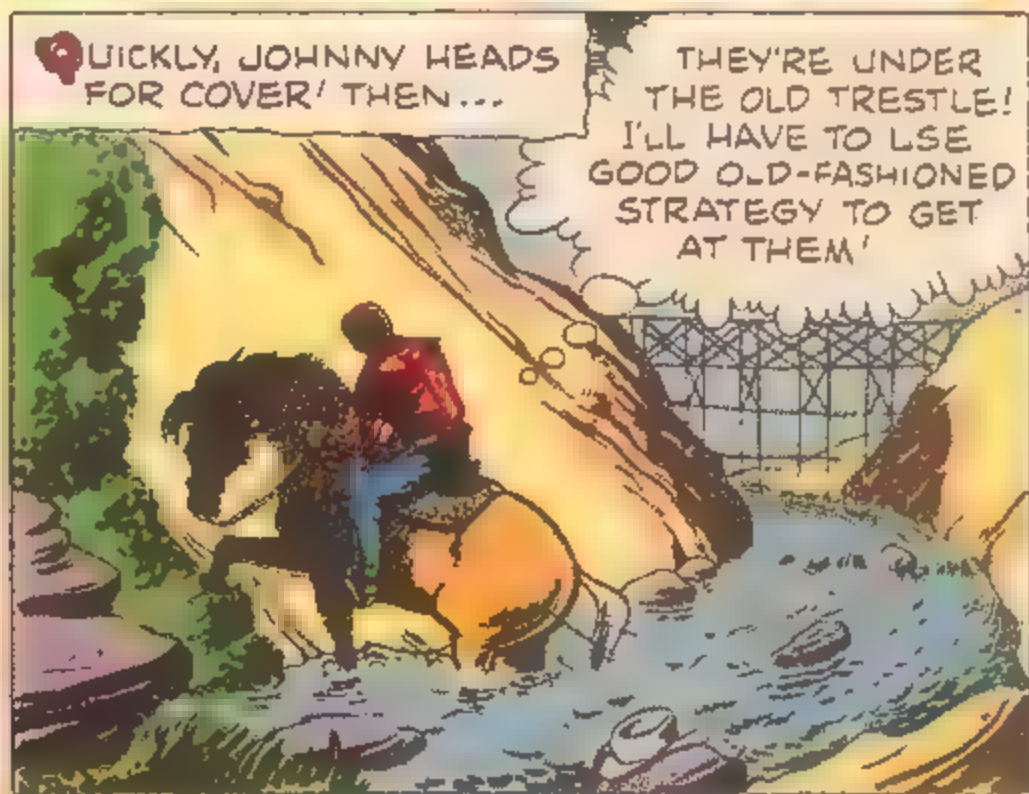


I RECKON
THAT
ANSWERS THE
QUESTION!



QUICKLY, JOHNNY HEADS
FOR COVER! THEN...

THEY'RE UNDER
THE OLD TRESTLE!
I'LL HAVE TO USE
GOOD OLD-FASHIONED
STRATEGY TO GET
AT THEM!



JOHNNY SENDS REBEL ON ALONE..

KEEP GOING, REBEL!
BUT NOT TOO FAR! I'LL
BE NEEDING YOU AGAIN
SOON, I HOPE!



AND UNDER THE TRESTLE...

GABE! I HEAR
A HORSE UP
ABOVE!

SO DO I! BROWN
MUST BE CIRCLING
AROUND TO THE OTHER
SIDE! I'LL COVER IT!
YOU STAY THERE!



MEANTIME, JOHNNY
HAS MOVED FAST...

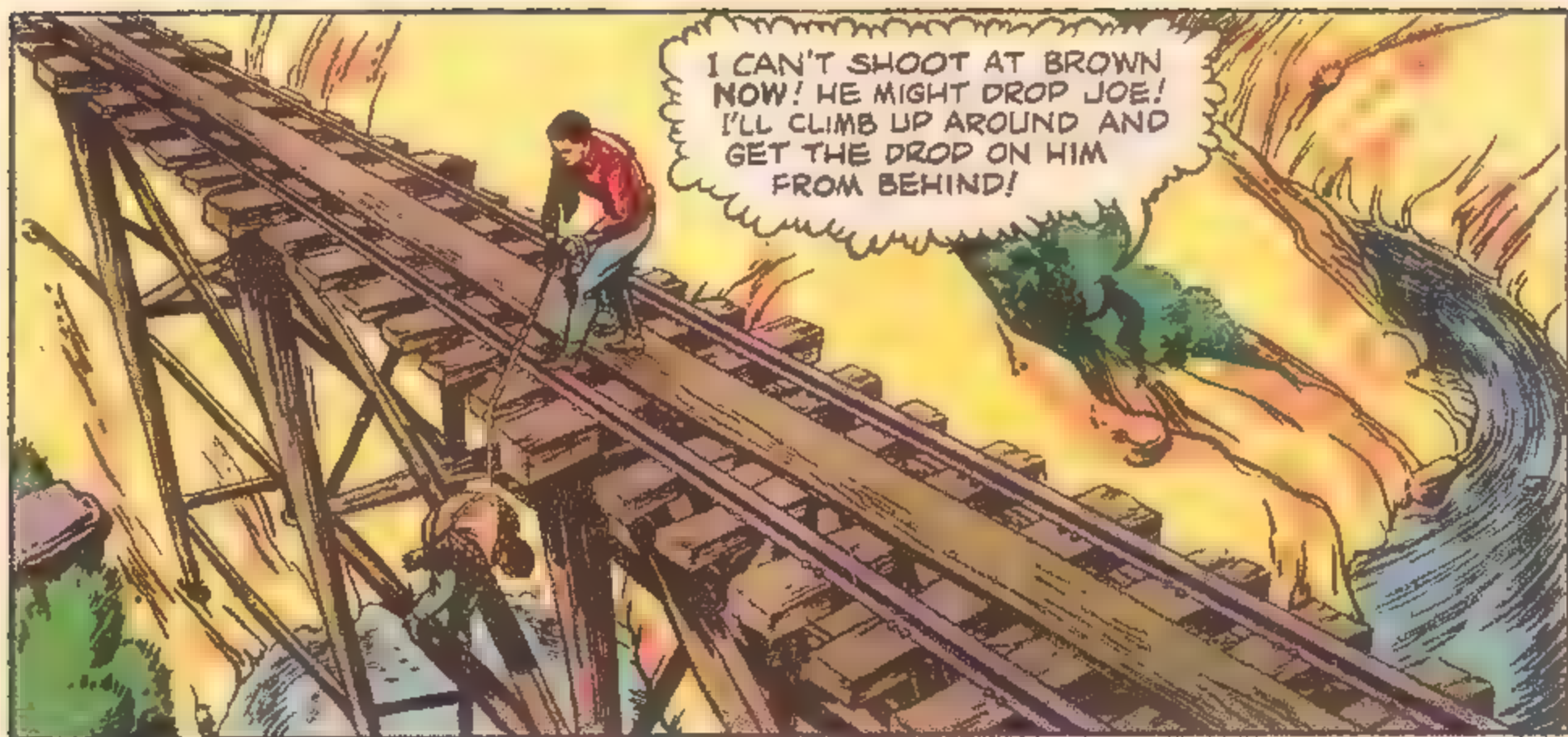
THERE'S ONE OF
THEM! IF I CAN RING
HIM ON THE FIRST TOSS,
THE ODDS WILL BE EVEN!



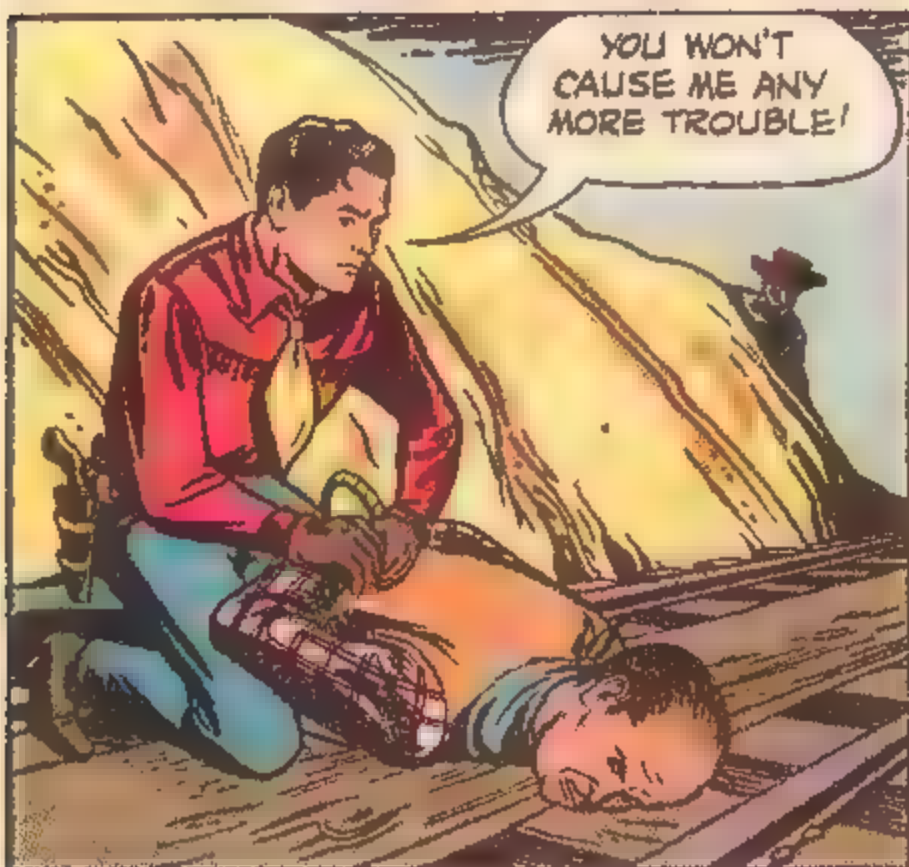
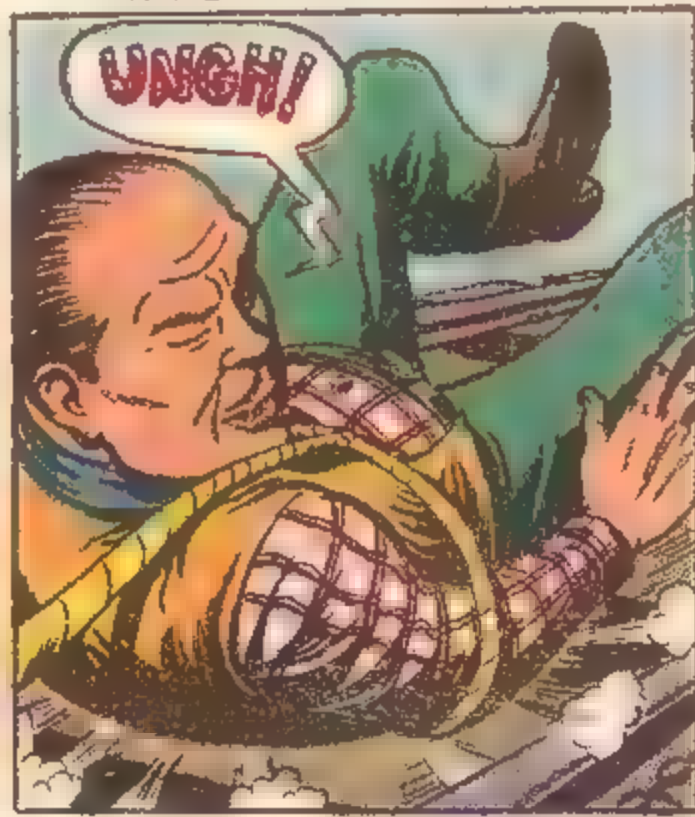
HOLY HAT!
BROWN'S ROPED
JOE!

GABE!
HELP!

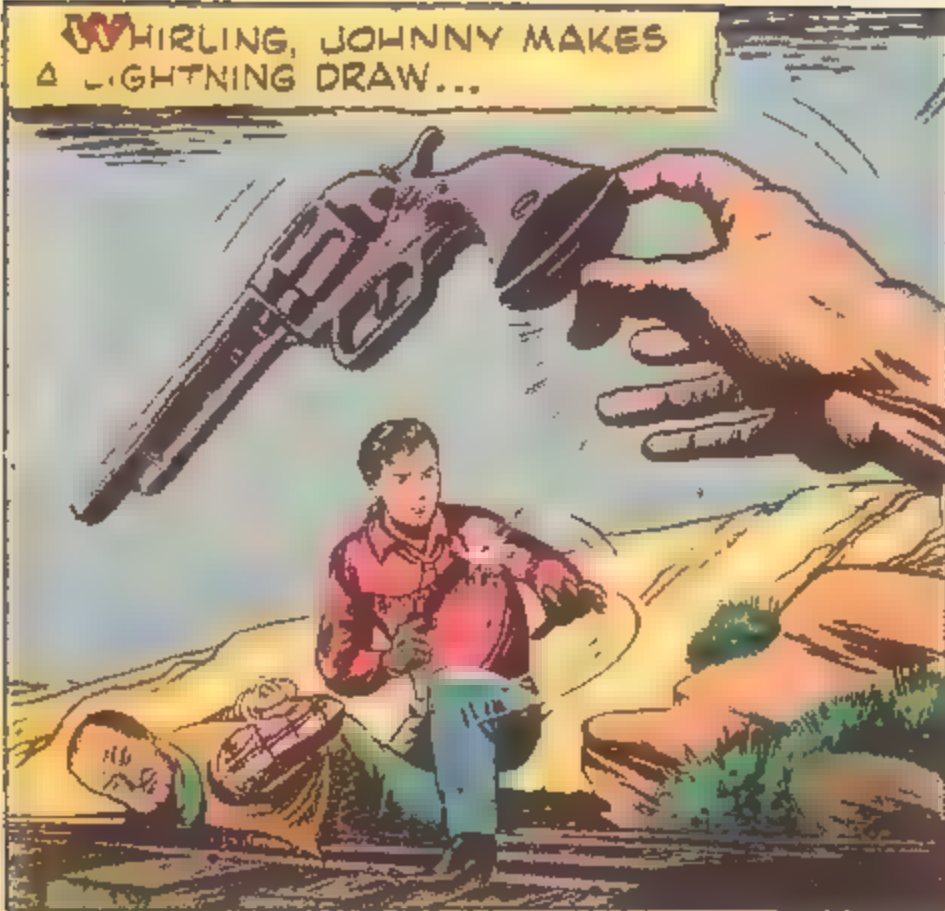




REGAINING HIS BALANCE, JOHNNY YANKS HARD ON THE ROPE...



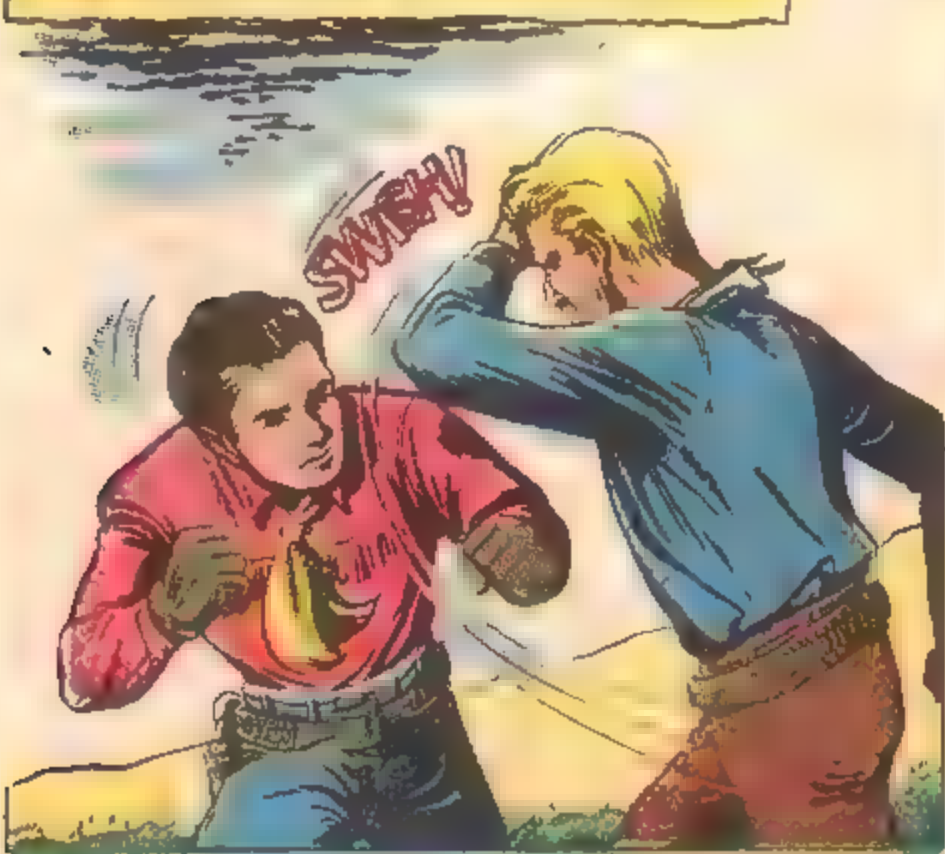
WHIRLING, JOHNNY MAKES
A LIGHTNING DRAW...



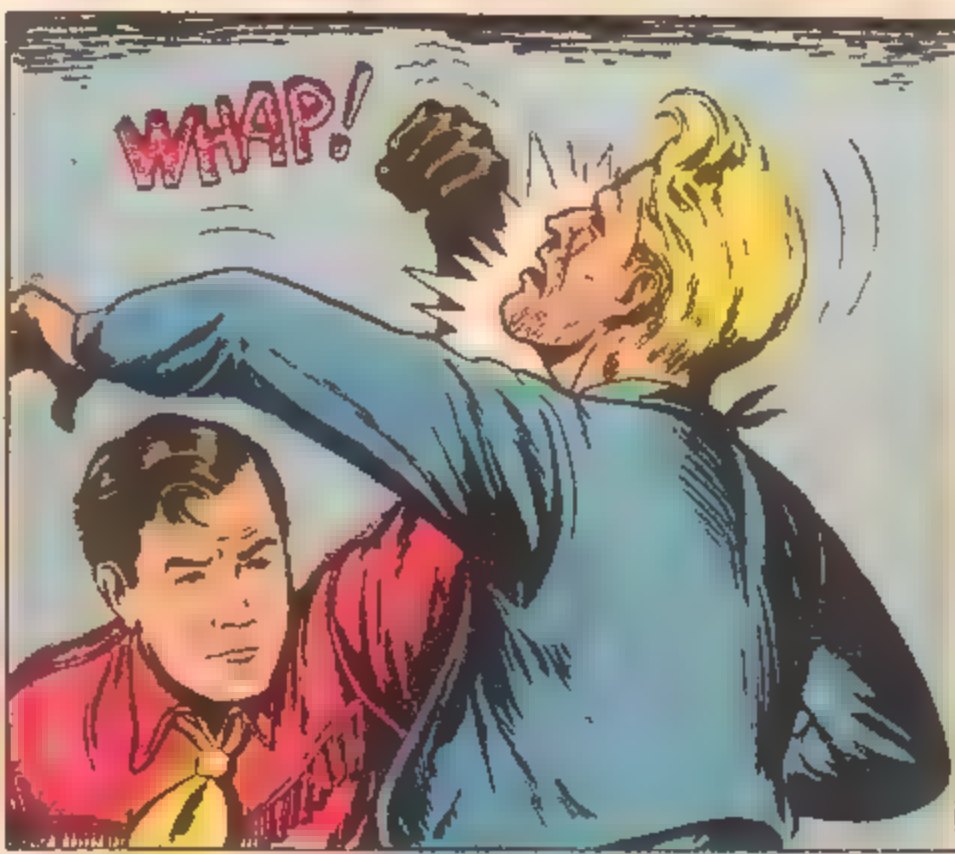
THEN LEAPS FOR
GABE...



DUCKS UNDER A WIDE SWING...



AND UNLEASHES A PARALYZING LEFT...

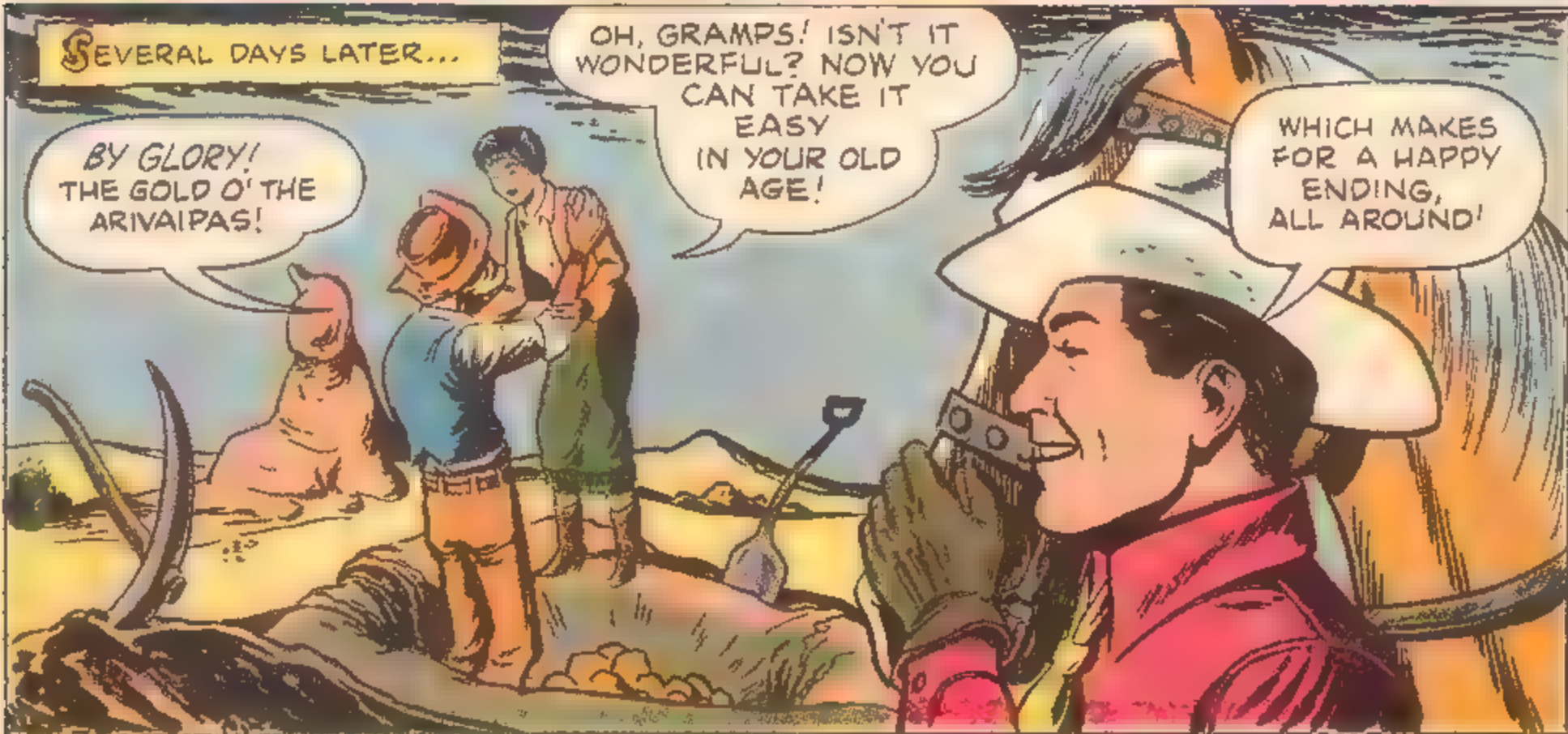


SEVERAL DAYS LATER...

BY GLORY!
THE GOLD O' THE
ARIVAIPAS!

OH, GRAMPS! ISN'T IT
WONDERFUL? NOW YOU
CAN TAKE IT
EASY
IN YOUR OLD
AGE!

WHICH MAKES
FOR A HAPPY
ENDING,
ALL AROUND!



JOHNNY MACK BROWN

in

DANGEROUS DESTINATION

AS JOHNNY MACK BROWN BREAKS CAMP IN WESTERN COLORADO, THE SUNRISE STILLNESS IS SHATTERED BY HOOFBEATS. A MOMENT LATER, A QUARTET OF SINISTER MASKED MEN THUNDERS OVER A NEARBY RISE...



I WONDER WHETHER THEY'RE COMING FROM TROUBLE OR HEADING FOR IT? AT ANY RATE, THEY LOOK SUSPICIOUS!

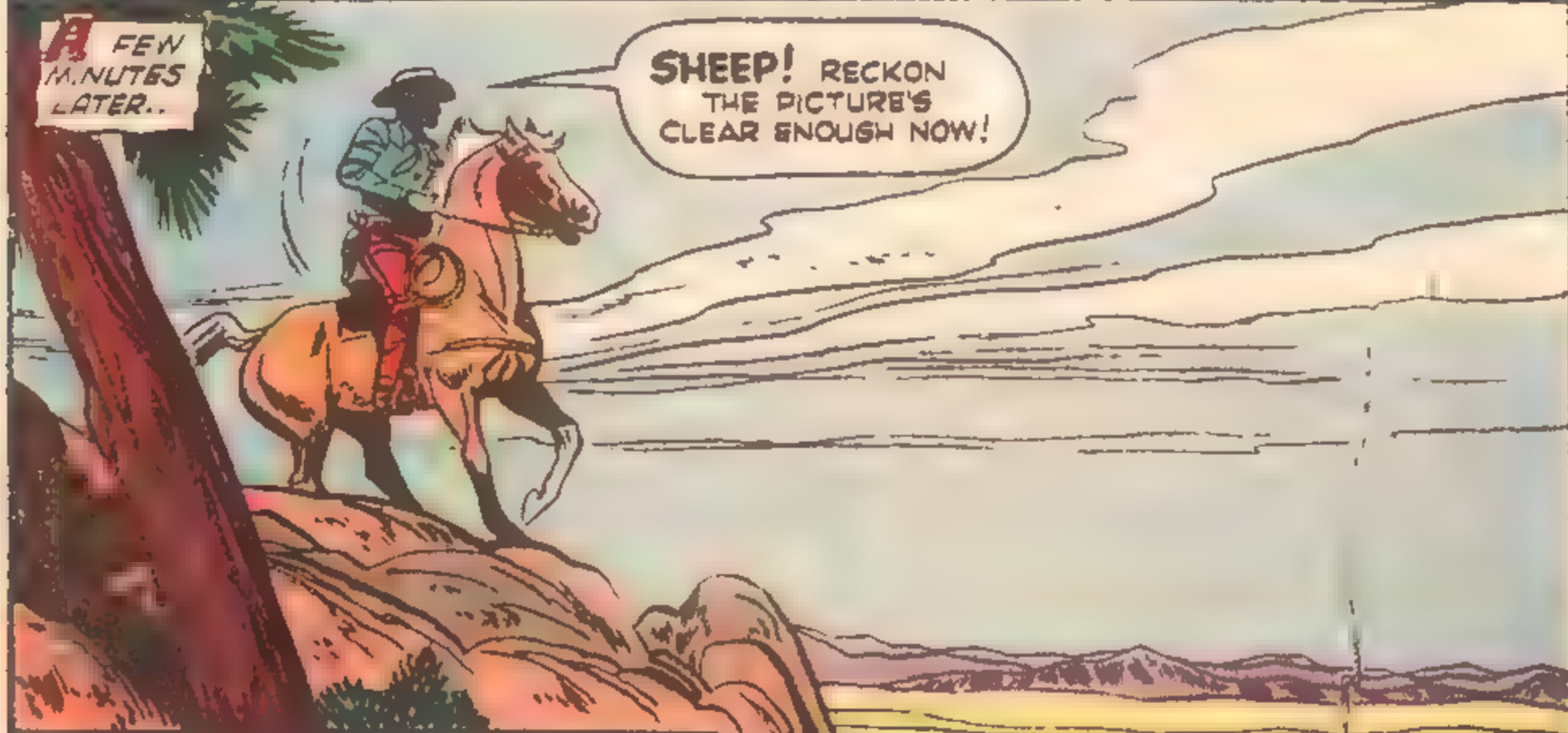


TRAILING EM MAY GIVE ME THE ANSWER! LET'S MOVE, REBEL!



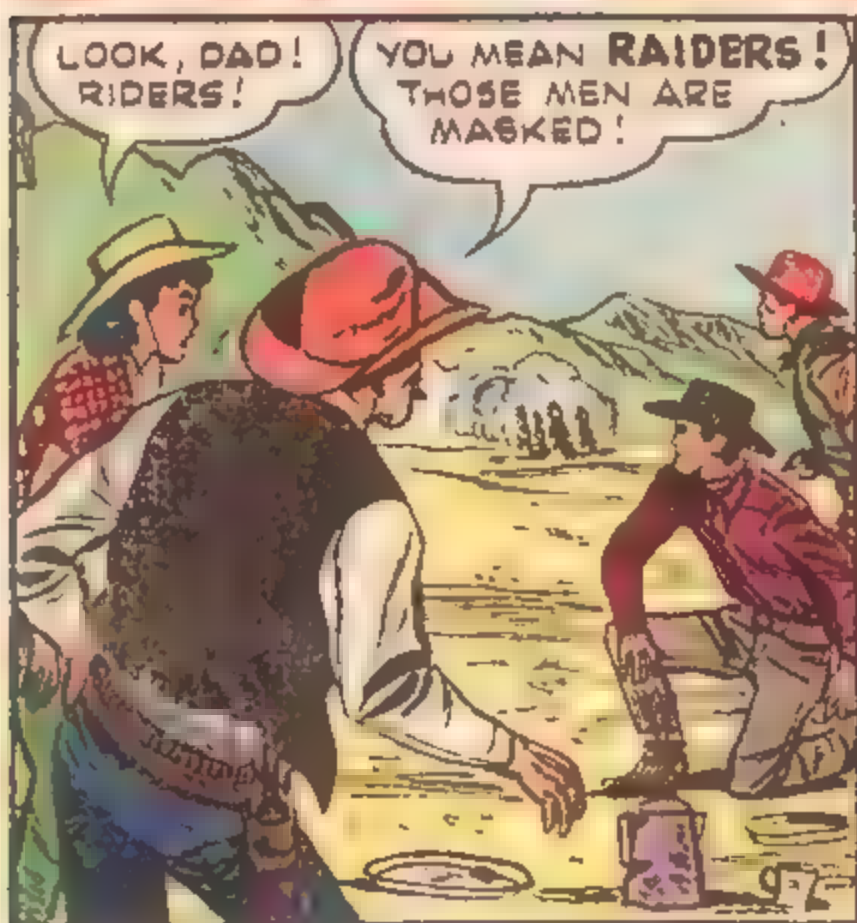
**A FEW
MINUTES
LATER..**

**SHEEP! RECKON
THE PICTURE'S
CLEAR ENOUGH NOW!**



**LOOK, DAD!
RIDERS!**

**YOU MEAN RAIDERS!
THOSE MEN ARE
MASKED!**

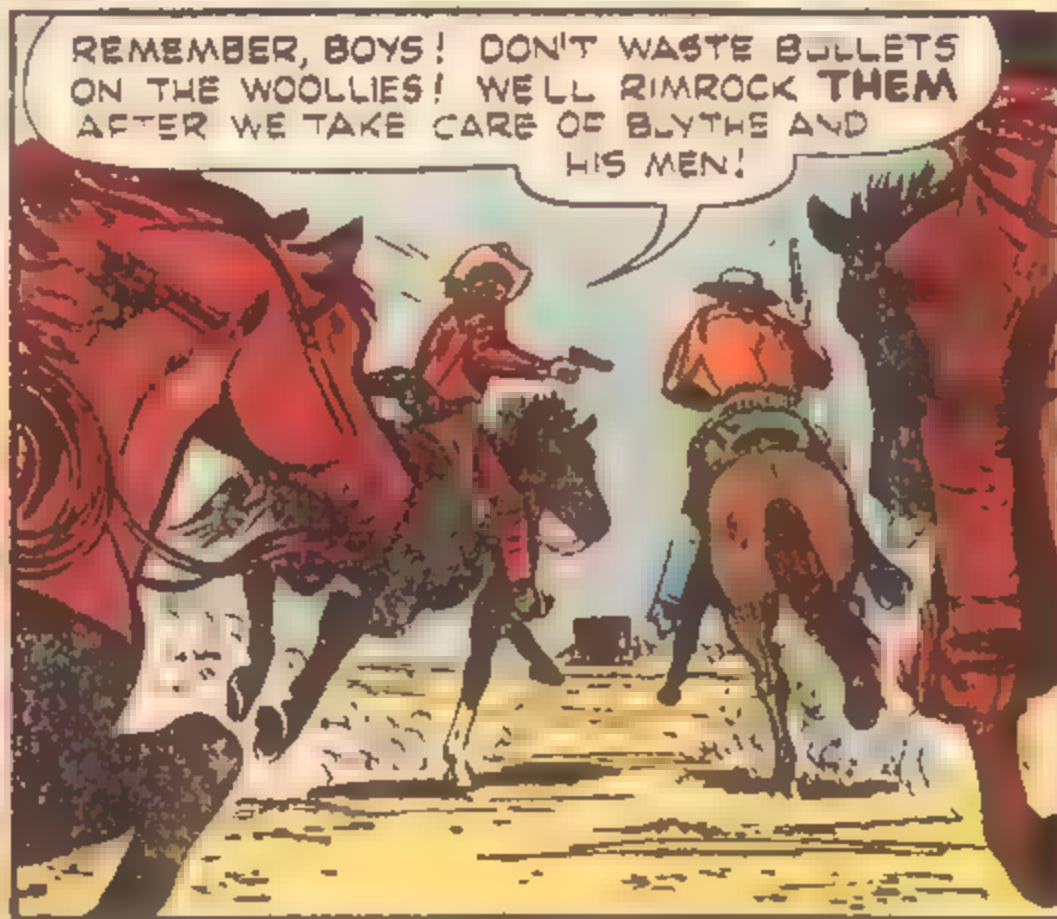


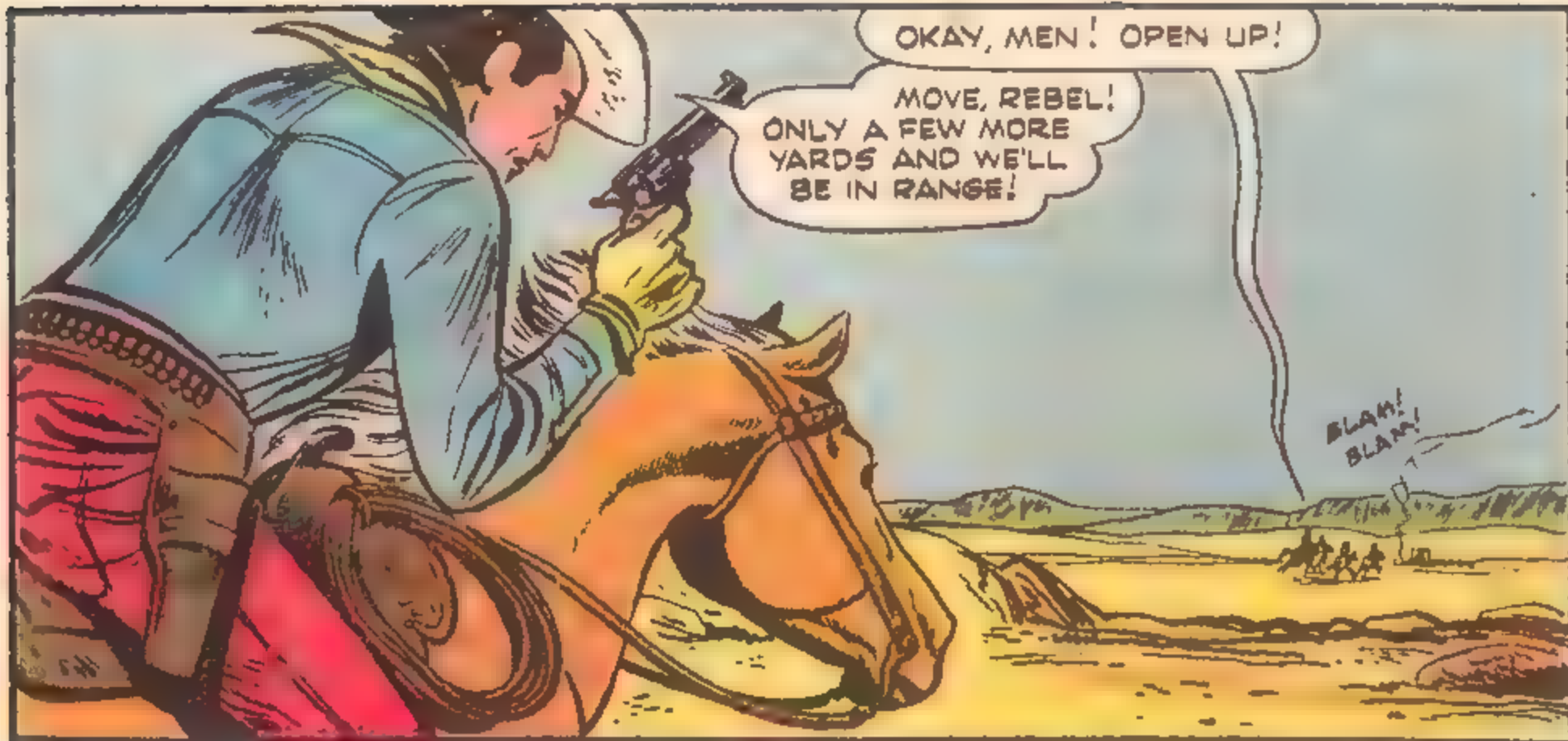
**TWO TO ONE,
IT'S GANNETT,
BOSS!**

**LET'S NOT TAKE ANY
CHANCES!... DUCK FOR
COVER— AND GET SET
TO FIGHT!**



**REMEMBER, BOYS! DON'T WASTE BULLETS
ON THE WOOLLIES! WE'LL RIMROCK THEM
AFTER WE TAKE CARE OF BLYTHE AND
HIS MEN!**

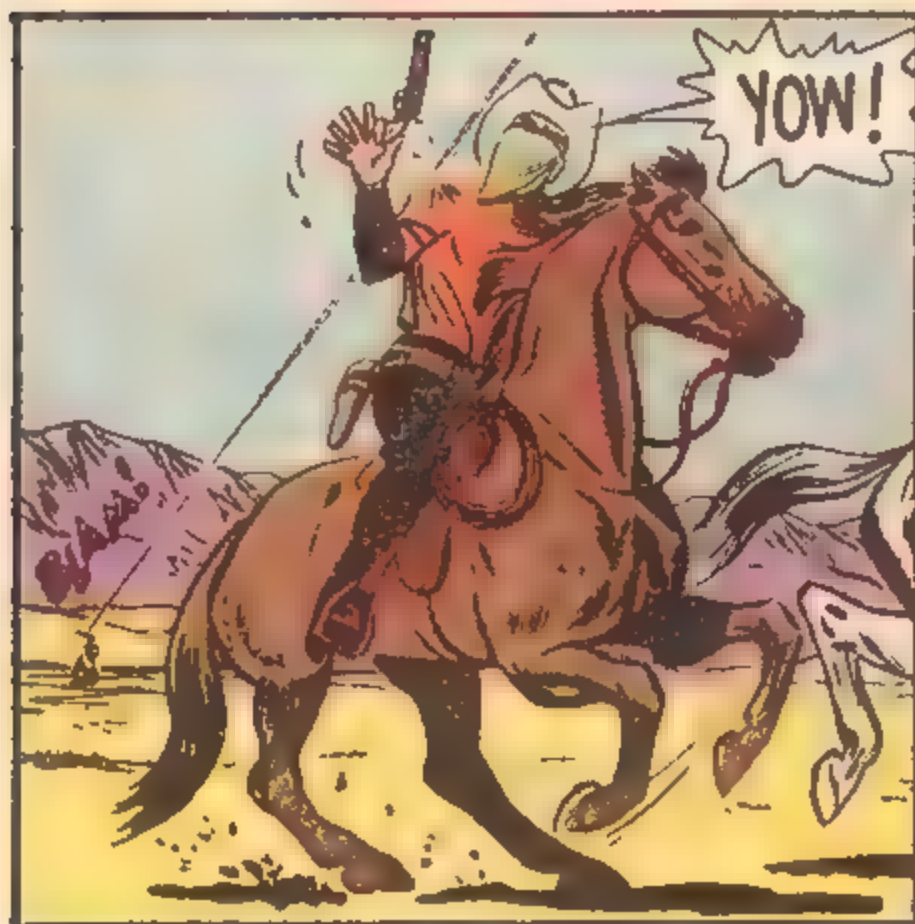




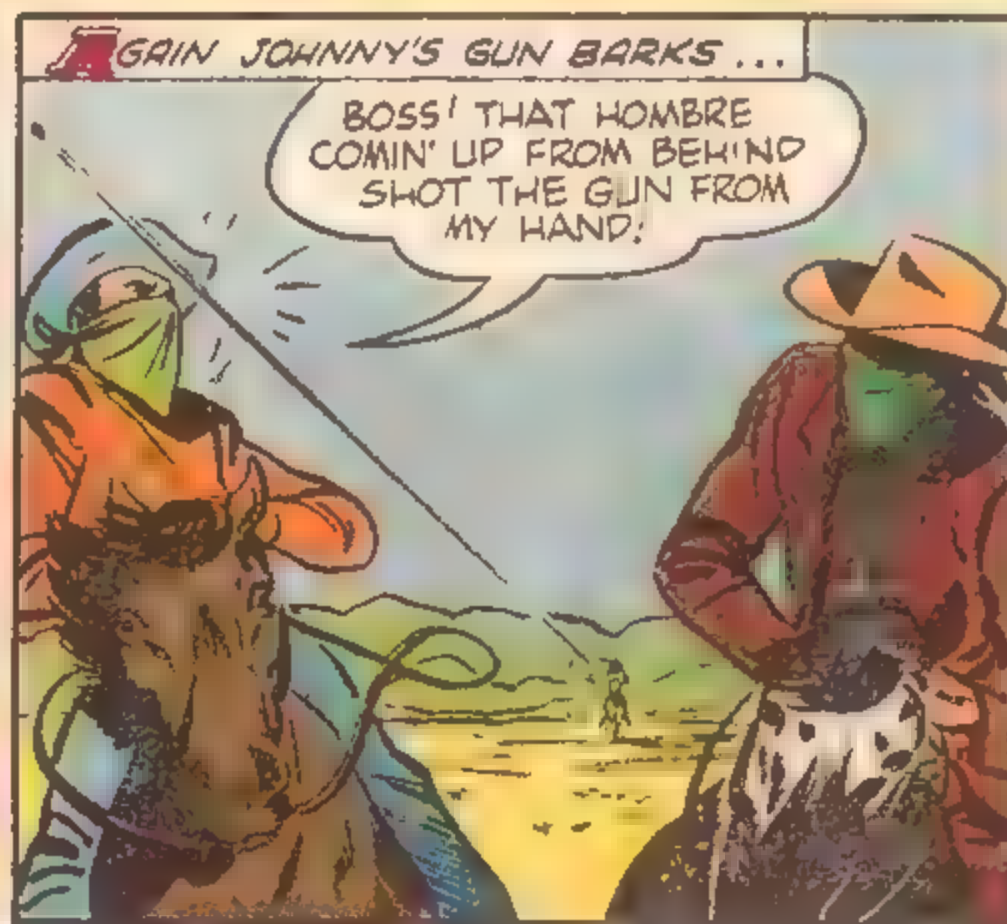
OKAY, MEN! OPEN UP!

MOVE, REBEL!
ONLY A FEW MORE
YARDS AND WE'LL
BE IN RANGE!

BLAM!
BLAM!

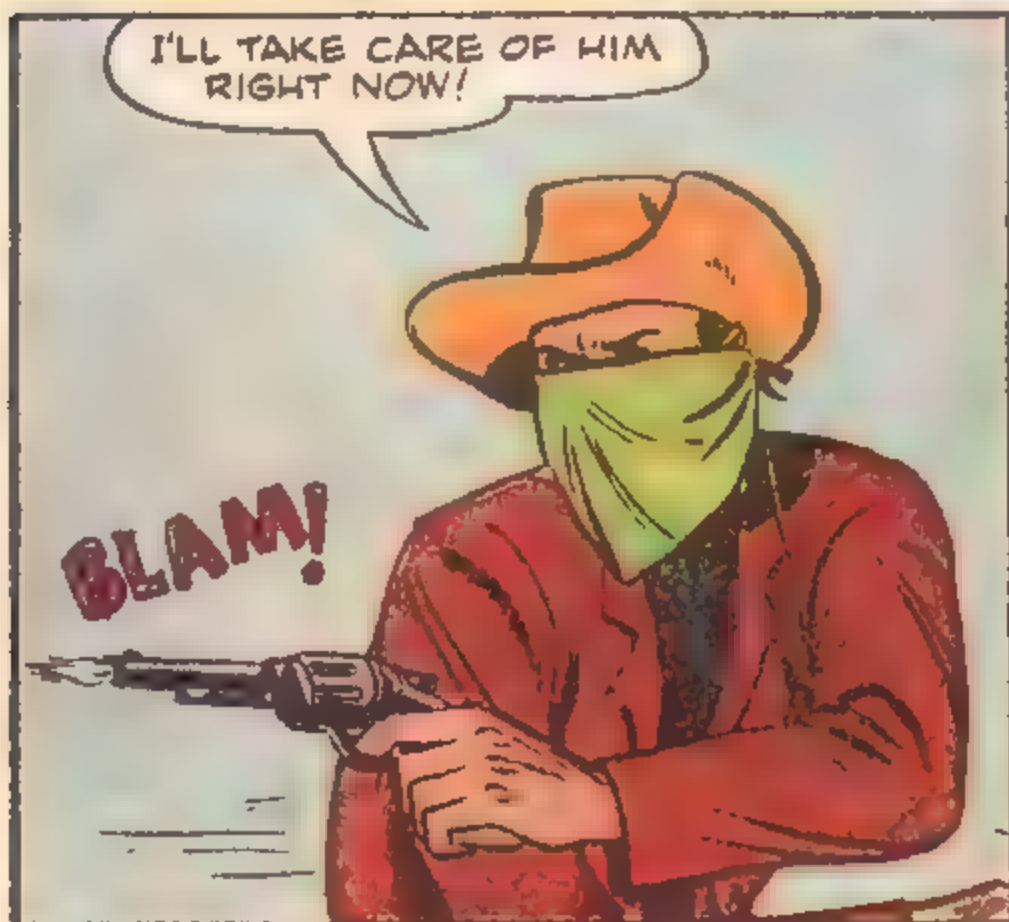


YOW!



AGAIN JOHNNY'S GUN BARKS ...

BOSS! THAT HOMBRE
COMIN' UP FROM BEHIND
SHOT THE GUN FROM
MY HAND!



I'LL TAKE CARE OF HIM
RIGHT NOW!

BLAM!

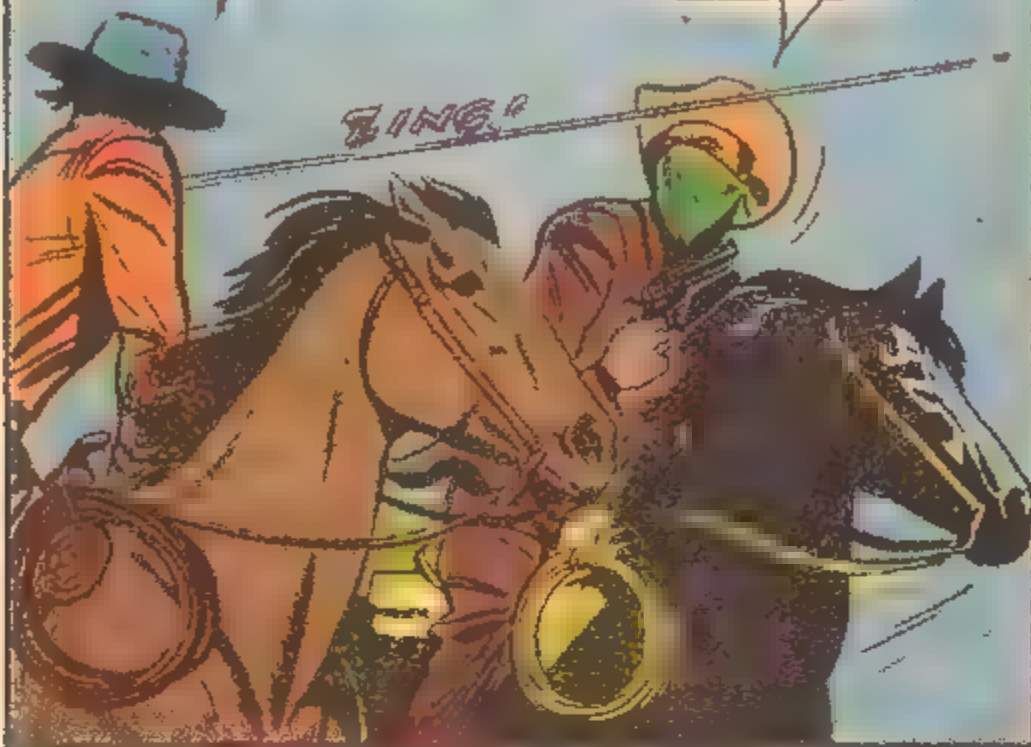


HE'S STILL
COMIN' FAST,
BOSS!

AND HE'S A SURE-'NOUGH
GUNSHARK, TOO!

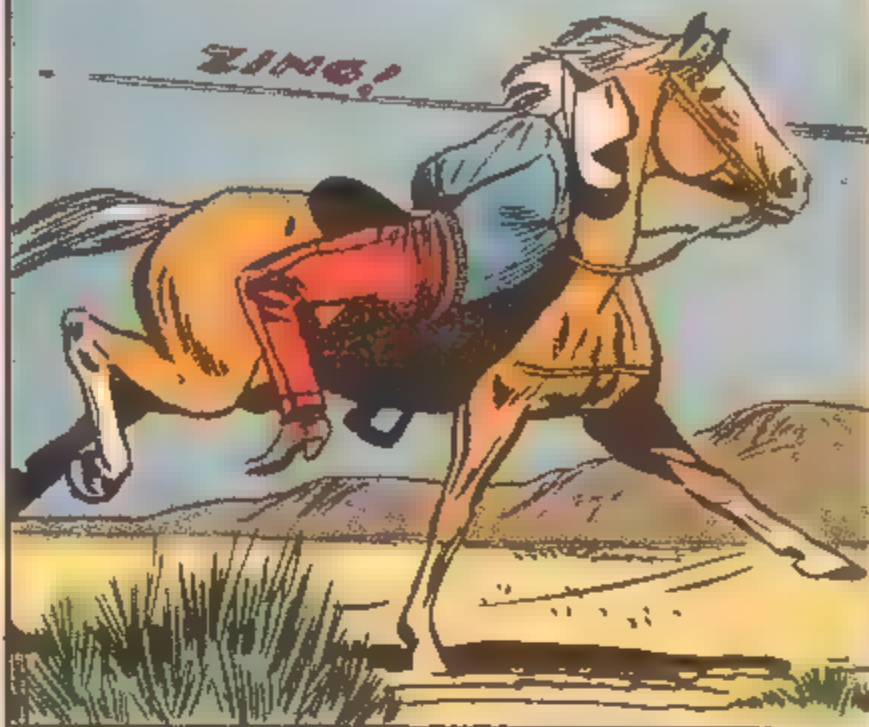
I'M NO ROOKIE
MYSELF! I'LL STILL
SHOW HIM!

ZING!



BUT AS DIRK FIRES,

ZING!



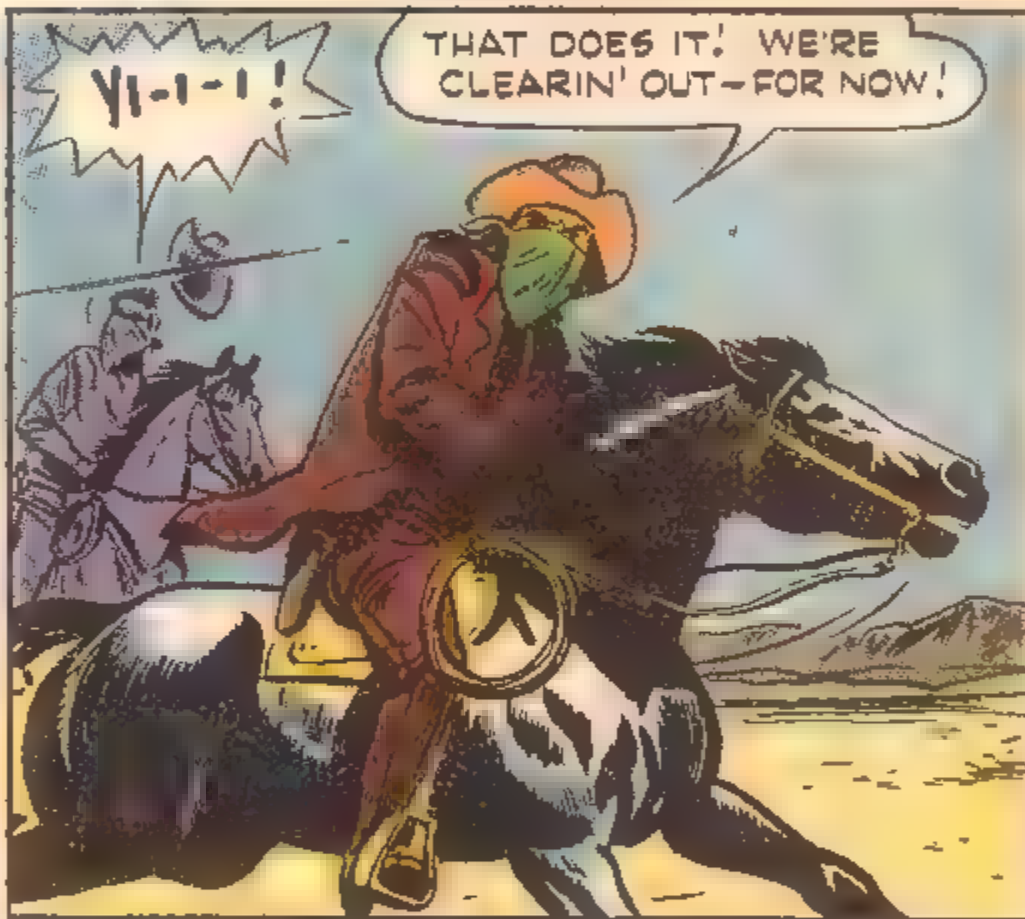
HE'S SMART, TOO!
DUCKED THAT SHOT
REAL NEAT-LIKE!

QUIT YAPPING
AND THROW LEAD!



YI-I-I!

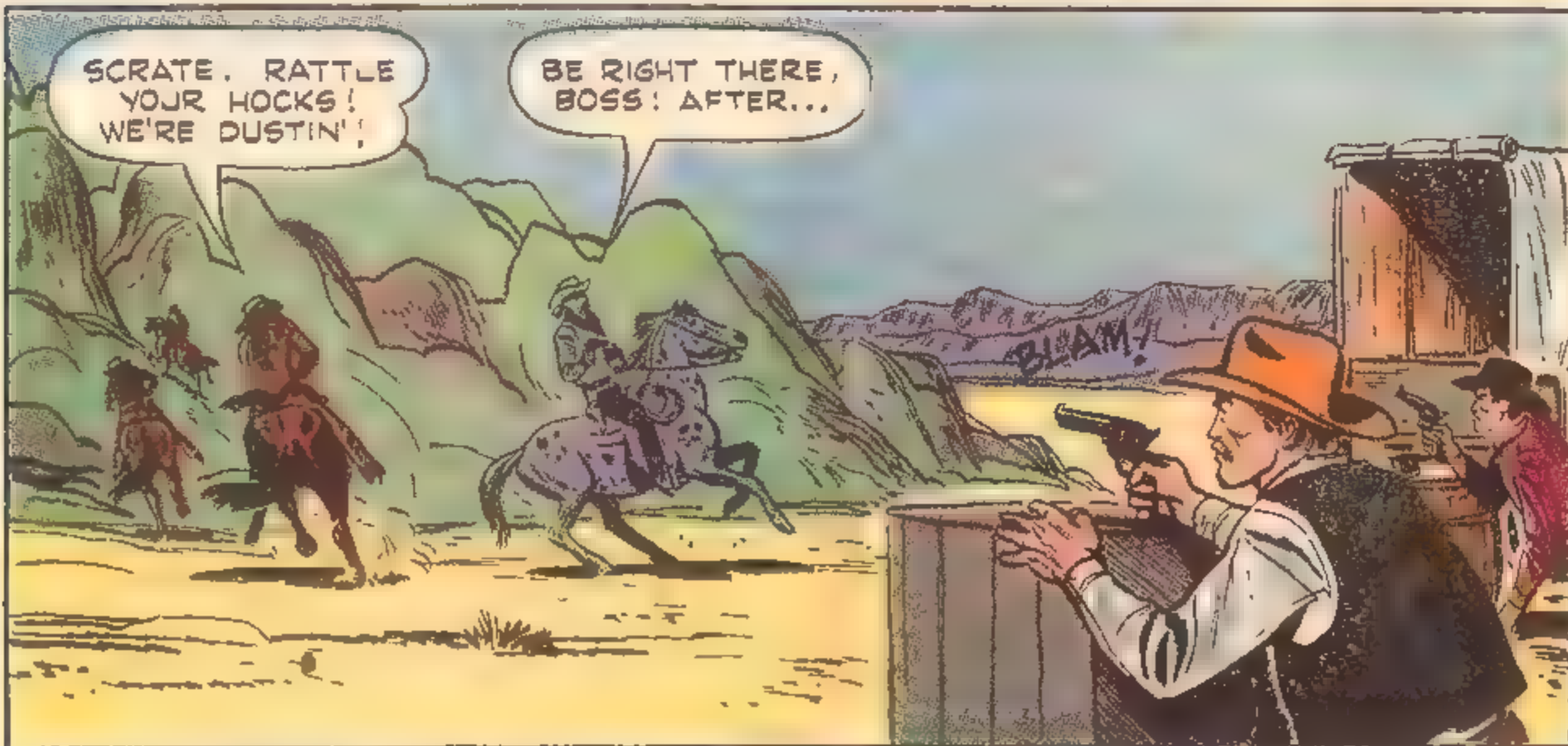
THAT DOES IT! WE'RE
CLEARIN' OUT-FOR NOW!

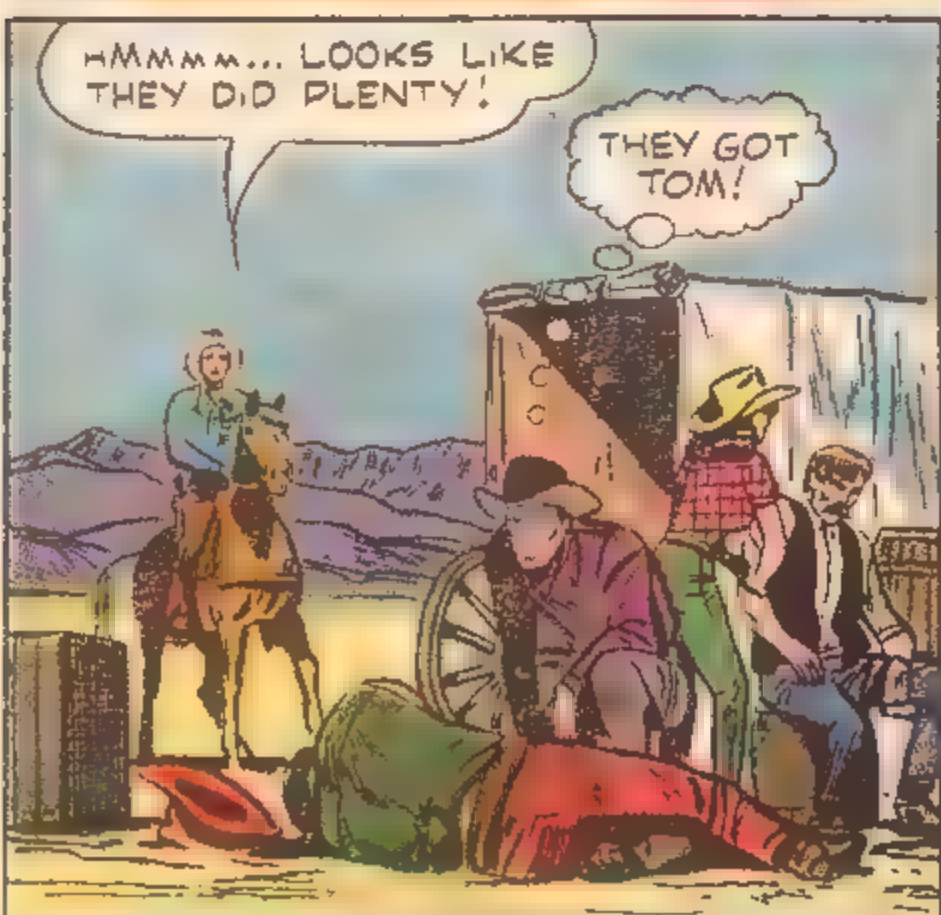
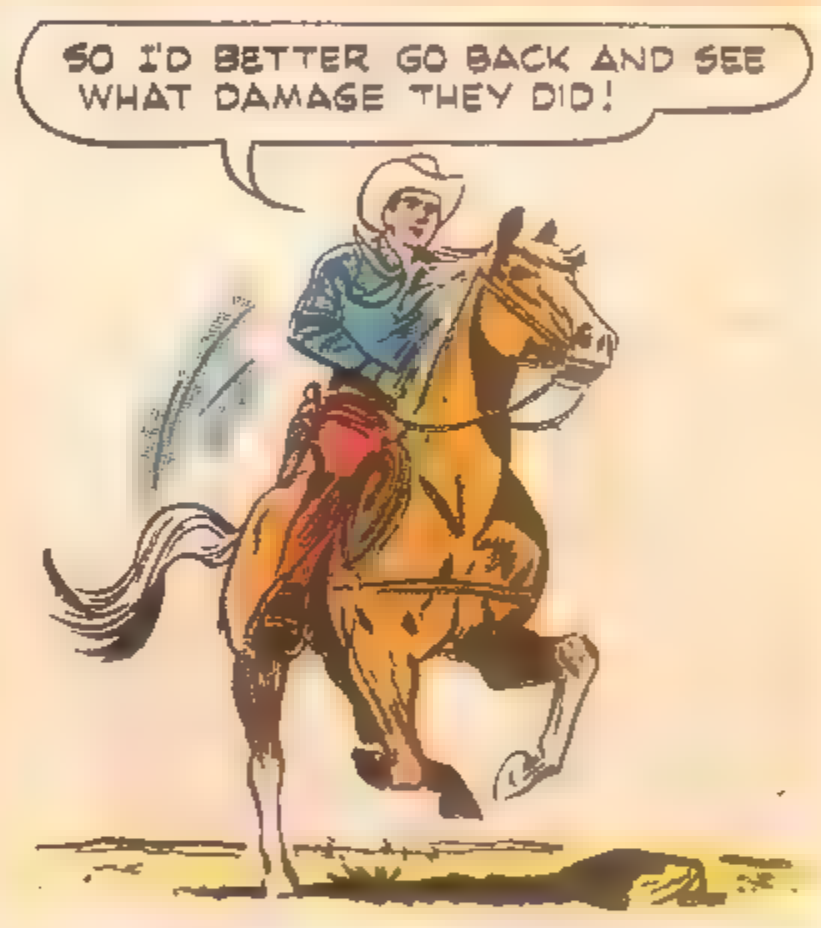
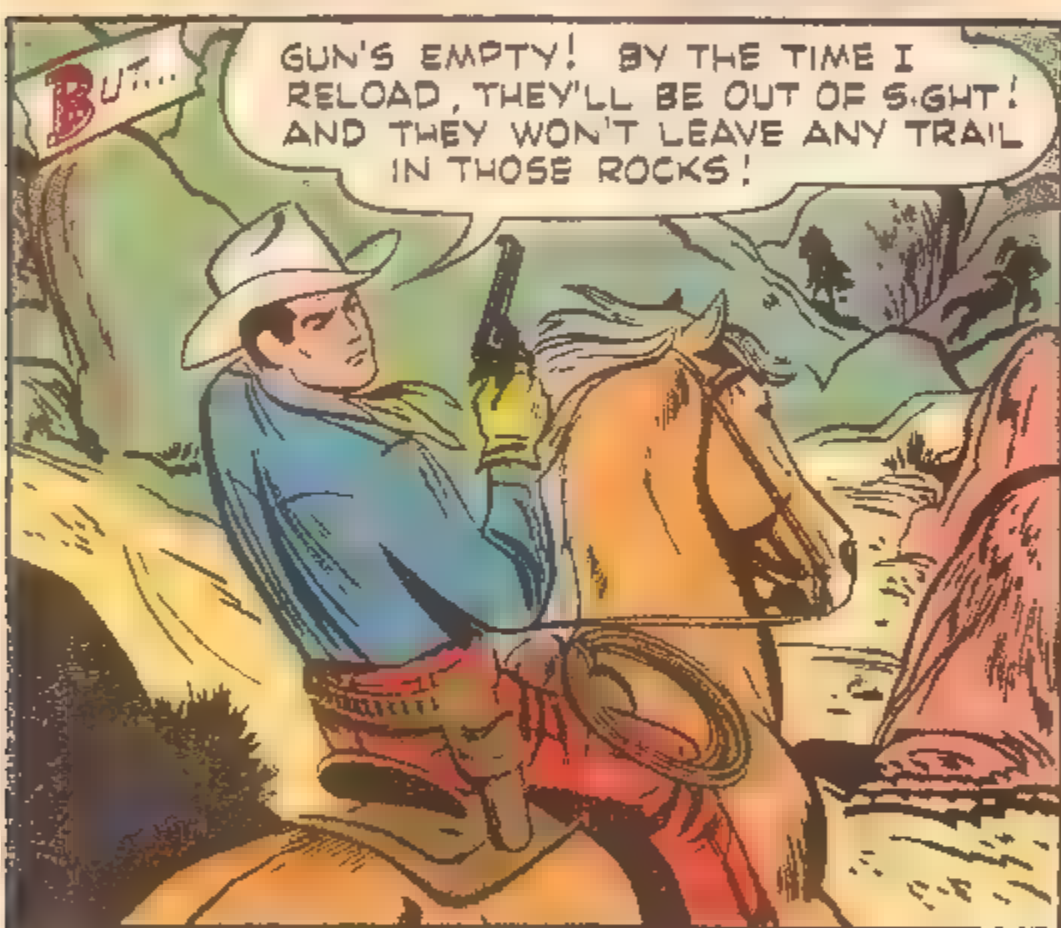
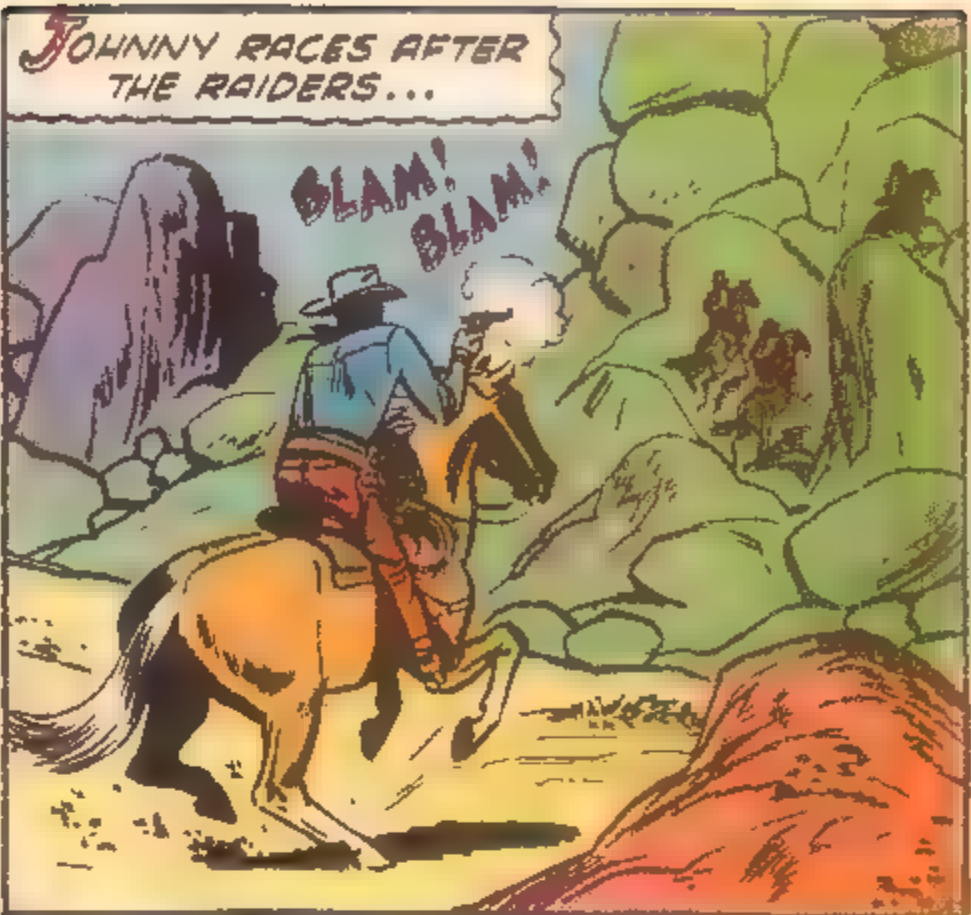
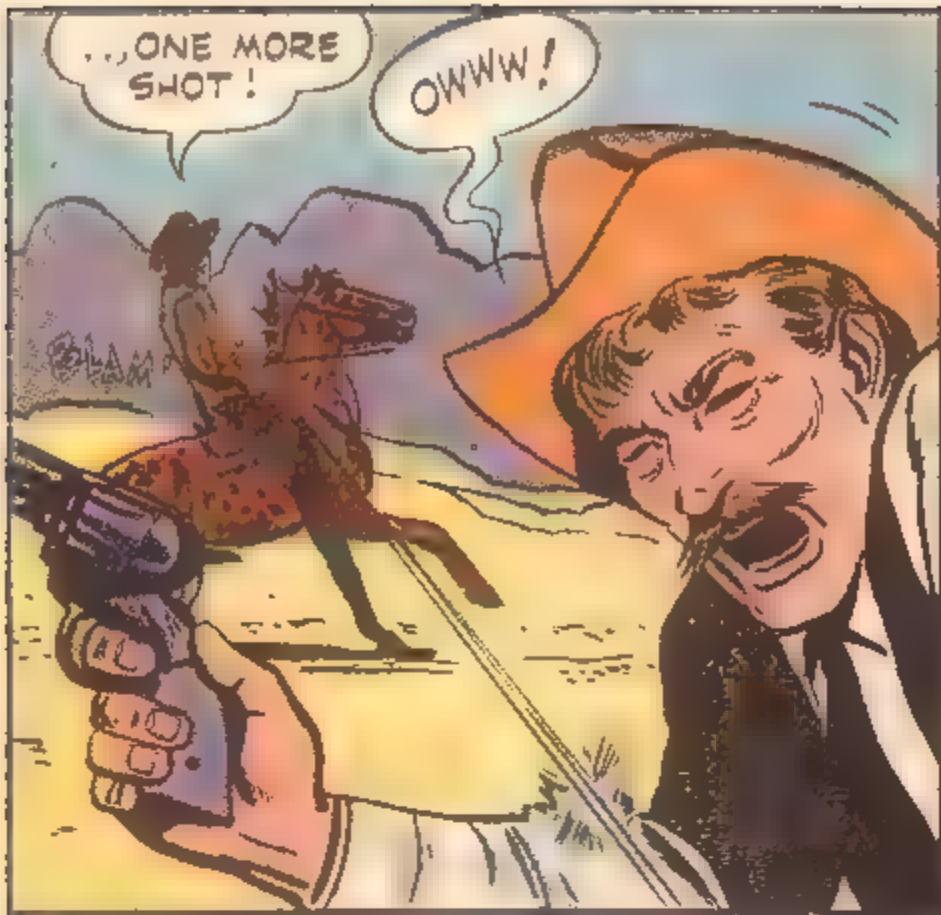


SCRATE. RATTLE
YOUR HOCKS!
WE'RE DUSTIN'!

BE RIGHT THERE,
BOSS! AFTER...

BLAM!



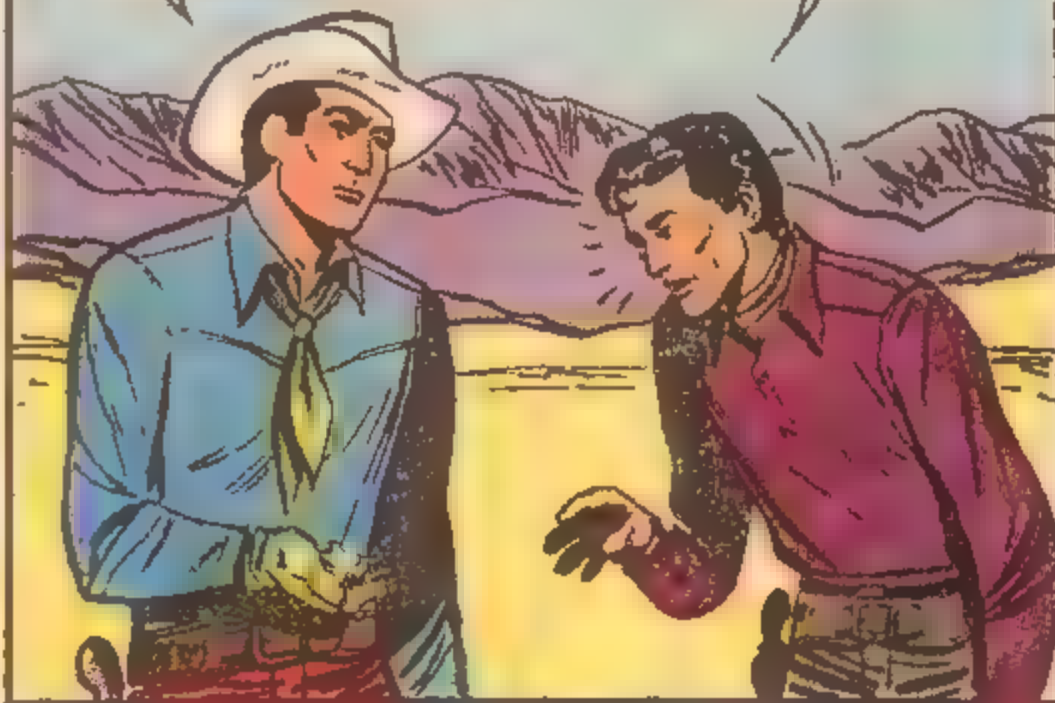


SO HELP ME, I'LL GET 'EM FOR THIS IF I HAVE TO HIRE MY OWN GANG O' GUNSLINGERS TO HELP ME!



THAT WON'T BE NECESSARY! I'LL GET THEM...LEGALLY!

A U.S. MARSHAL!



RIGHT! THE NAME IS JOHNNY MACK BROWN!

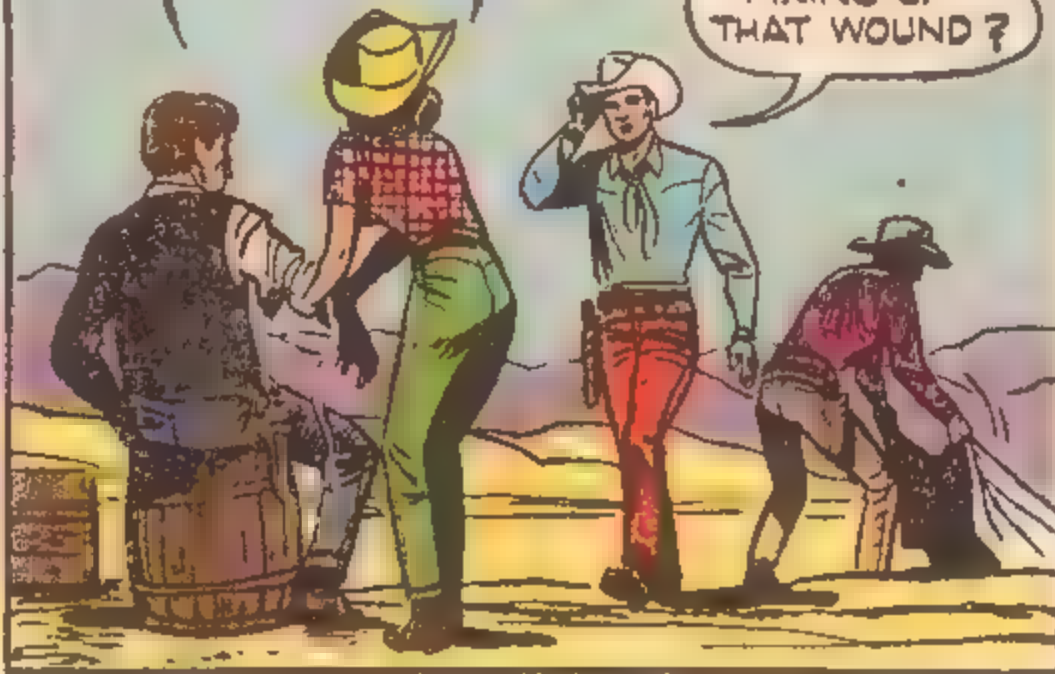
MINES CURLY CLARK! AN' I'M RIGHT PROUD TO MEET YOU! AFTER HEARIN' SO MUCH ABOUT YOU!



THAT GOES FOR ME, TOO! I'M RUFUS BLYTHE! AN' THIS IS MY DAUGHTER, JULIE!

HELLO!

HOWDY! NEED ANY HELP FIXING UP THAT WOUND?



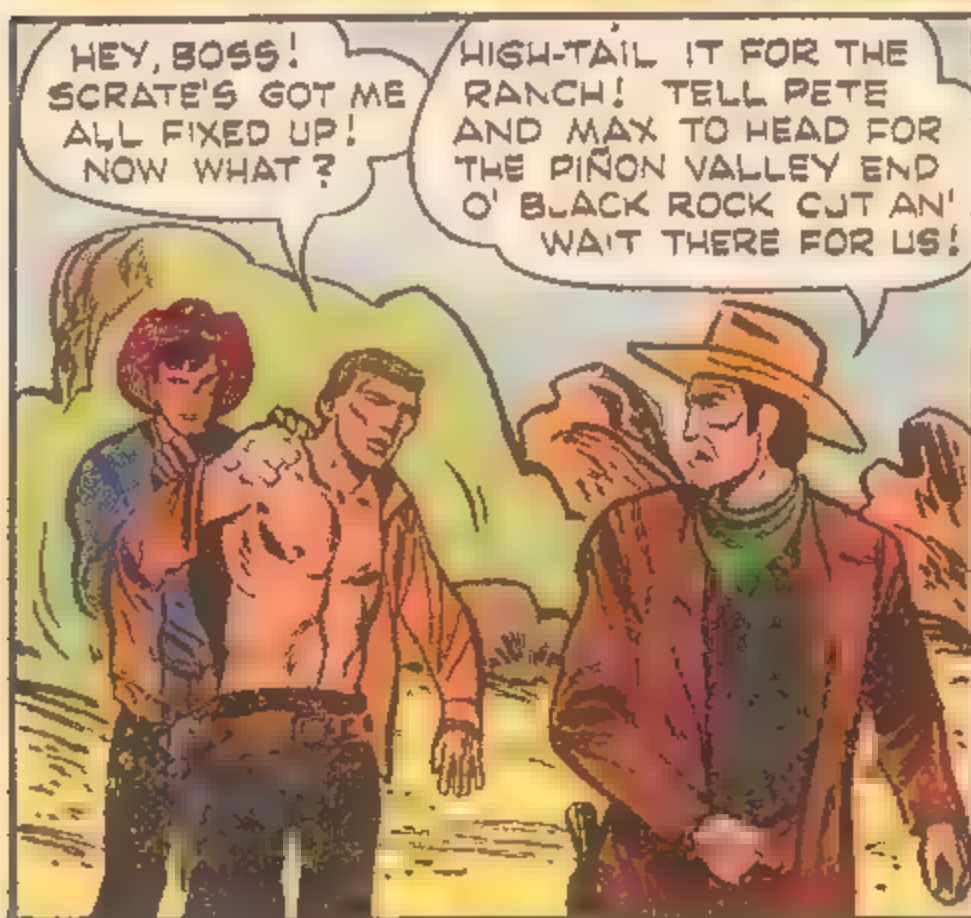
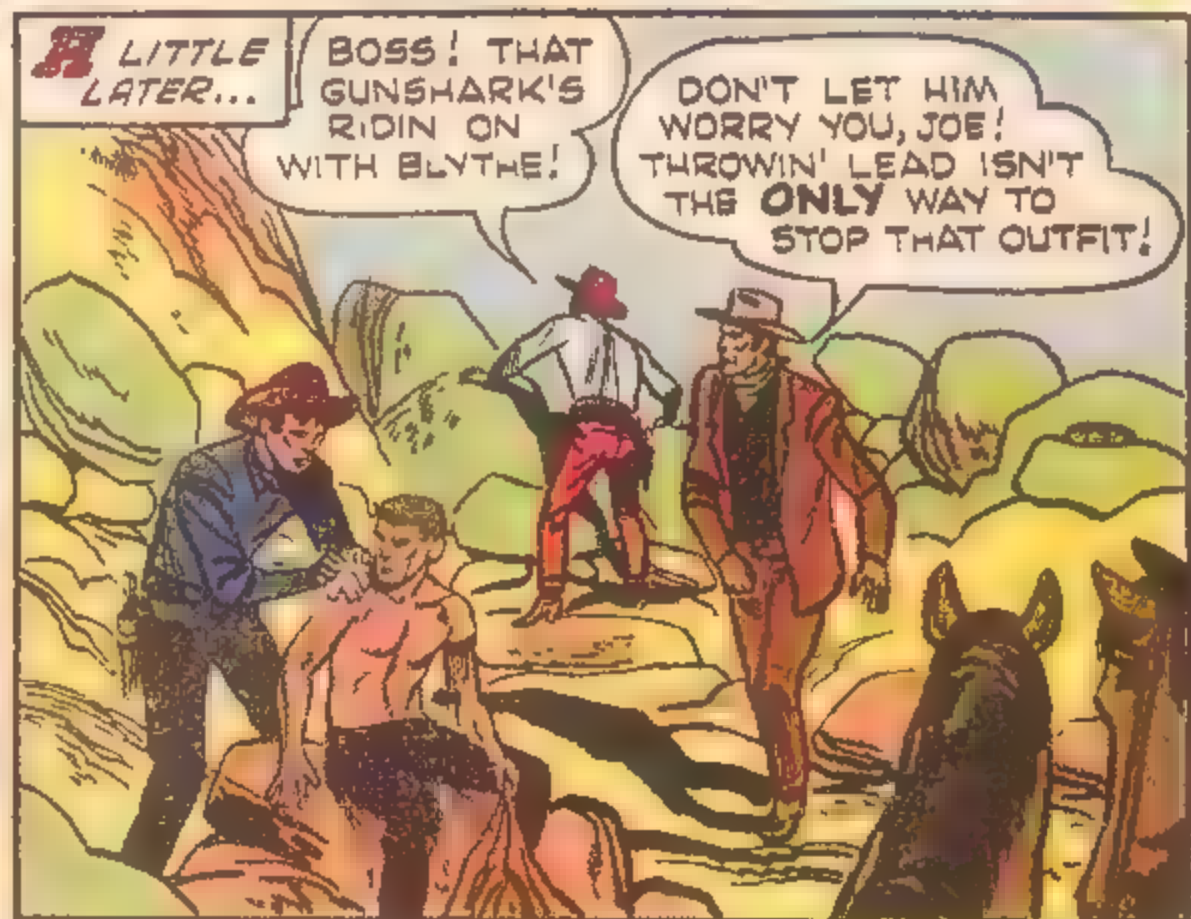
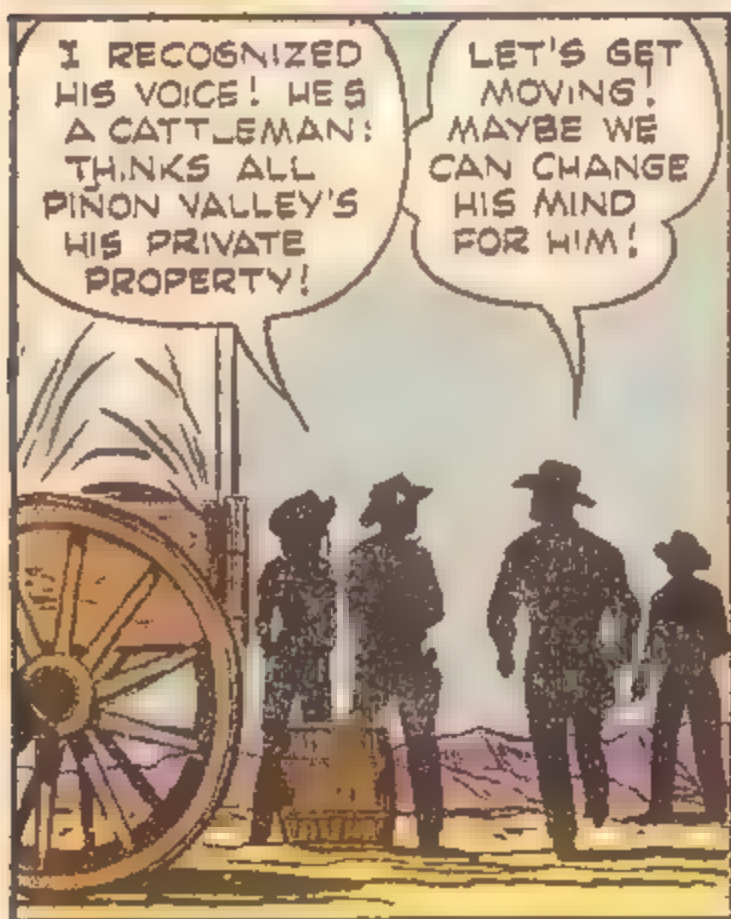
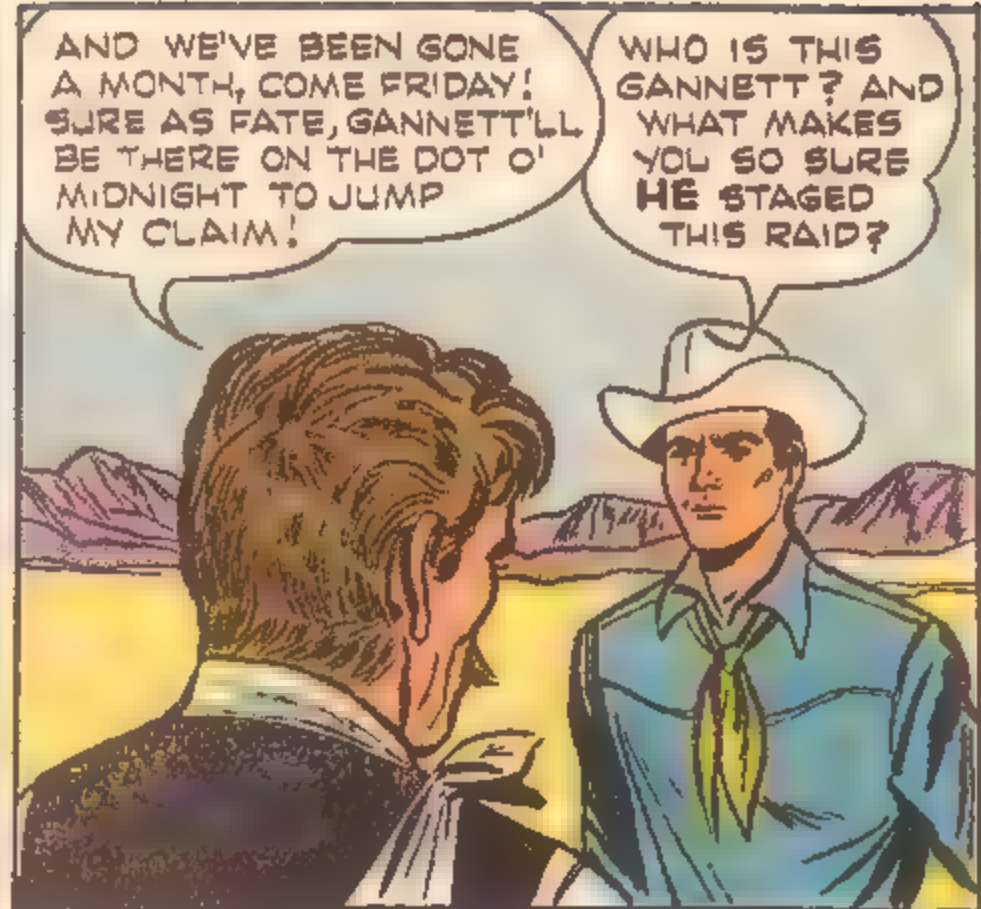
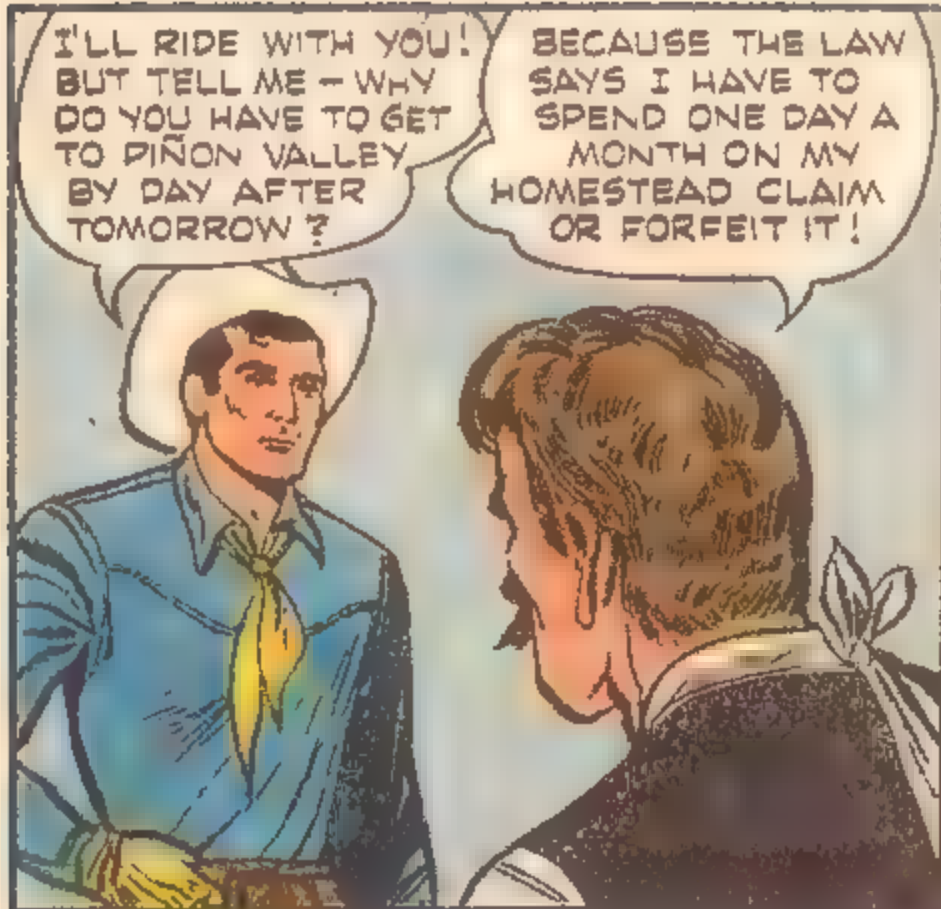
NO, THANKS! IT'S ONLY A CREASE! BUT DAD WON'T DO ANY MORE SHOOTING FOR A FEW DAYS!

WHICH MEANS I MIGHT AS WELL GIVE UP TRYIN' TO REACH PINON VALLEY BY THURSDAY!



GANNETT'S NOT THROUGH WITH ME! HE'LL BE BACK! MAYBE WITH MORE GUNHANDS! IT'S A CINC H YOU AND CURLY CAN'T HOLD 'EM OFF ALONE!

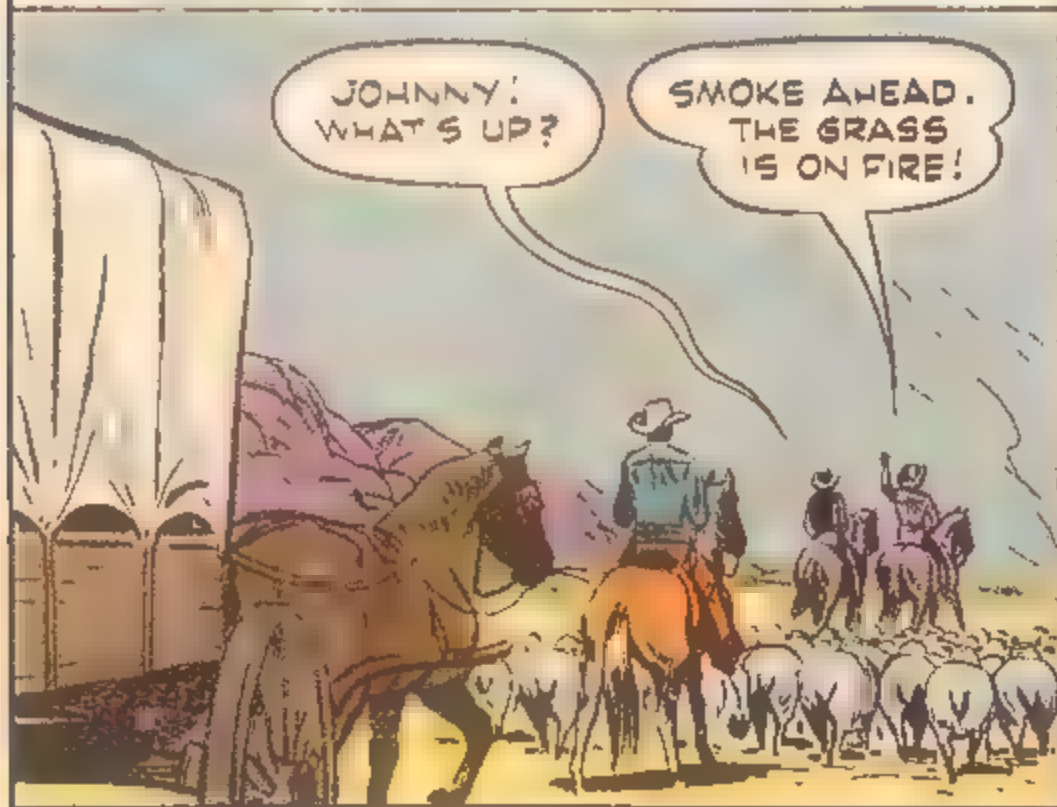




TOWARD SUNDOWN IN A NARROW VALLEY,
JOHNNY SUDDENLY PULLS UP...

JOHNNY:
WHAT'S UP?

SMOKE AHEAD.
THE GRASS
IS ON FIRE!



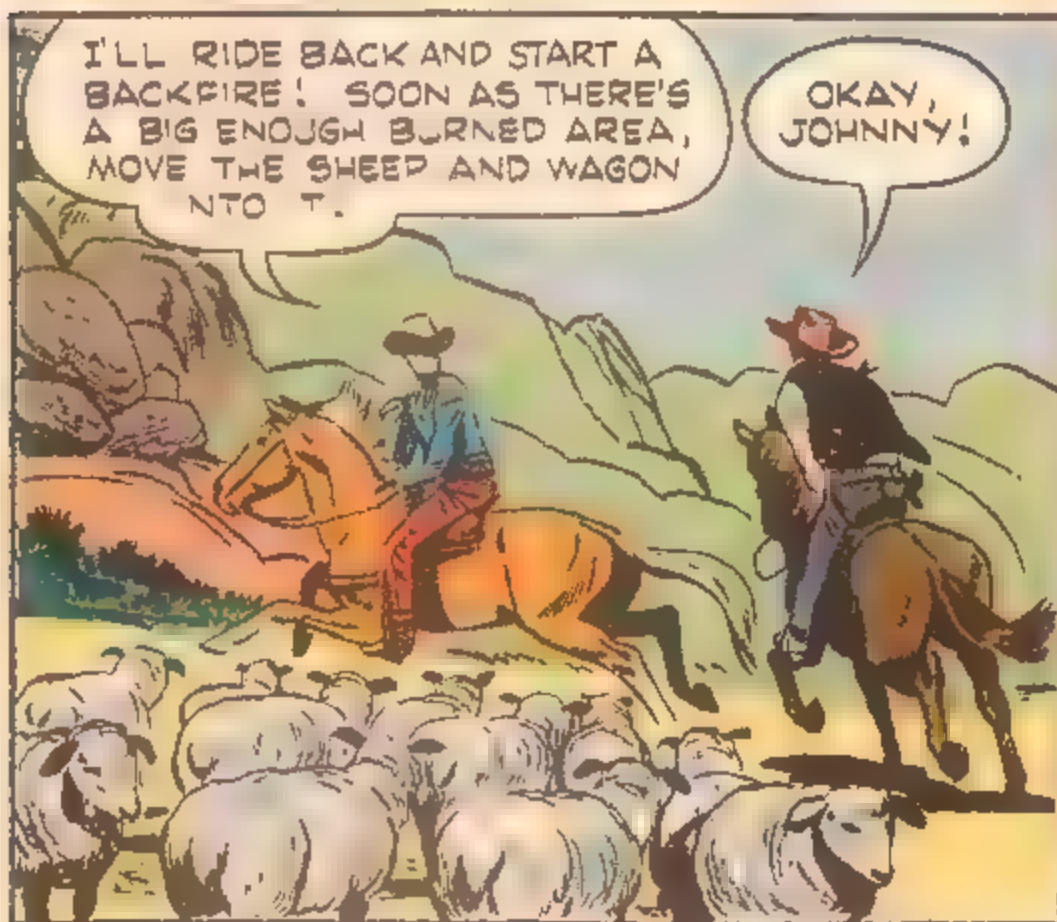
AND THERE ARE
THE POLECATS WHO
STARTED IT!

GANNETT'S
GANG! NO
MISTAKIN'
THAT BLACK
STALL ON!



I'LL RIDE BACK AND START A
BACKFIRE! SOON AS THERE'S
A BIG ENOUGH BURNED AREA,
MOVE THE SHEEP AND WAGON
INTO IT.

OKAY,
JOHNNY!



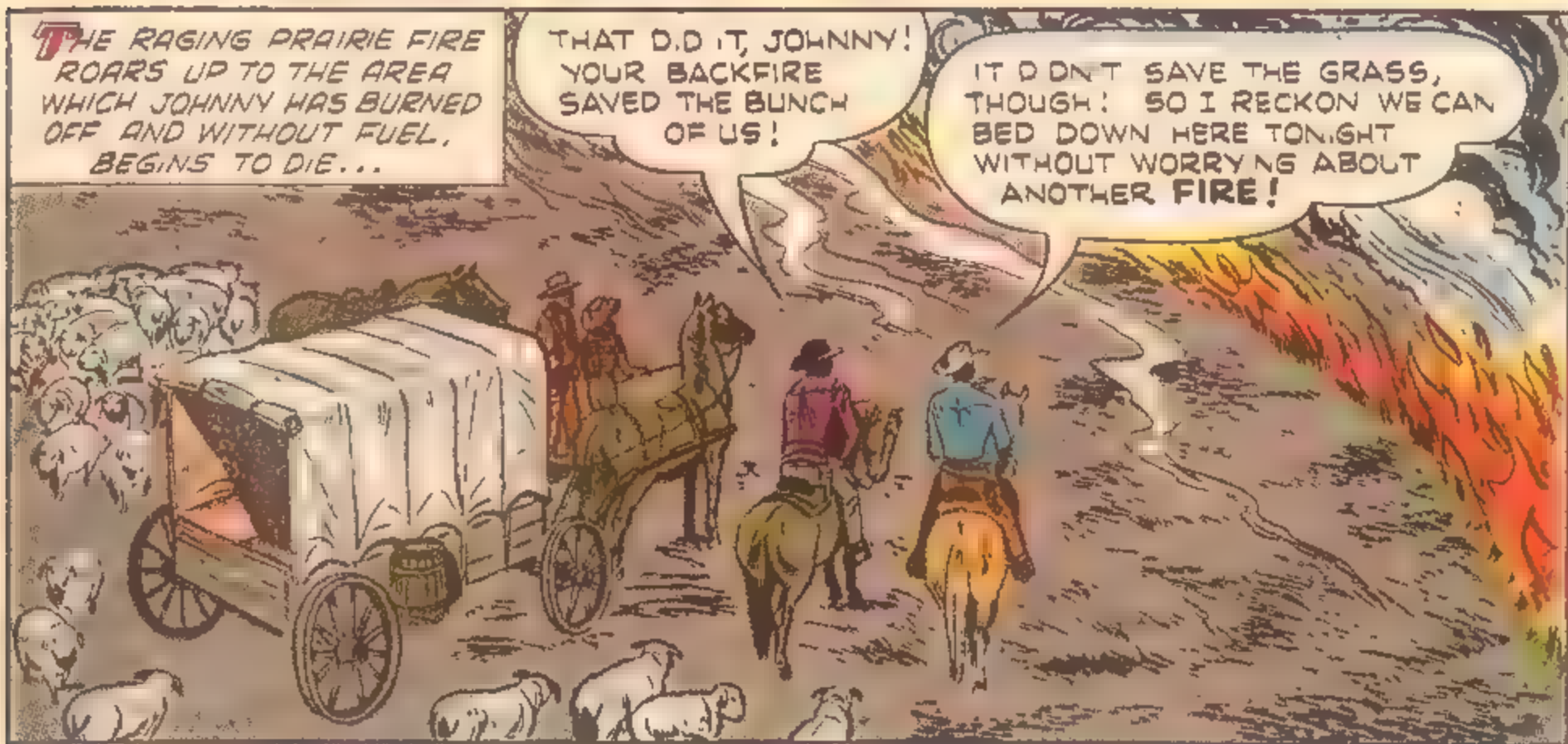
THIS OUGHT TO
DO THE TRICK!

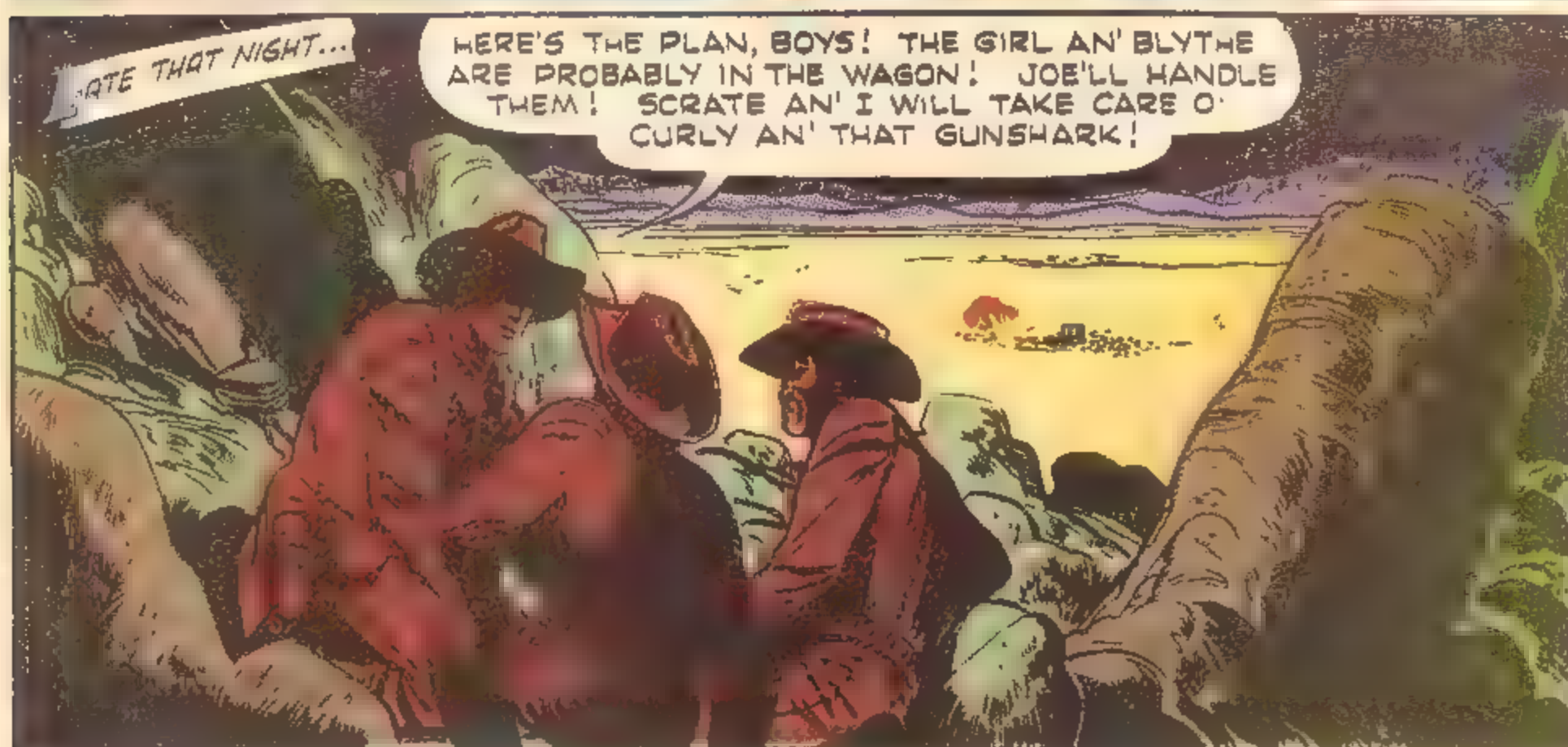
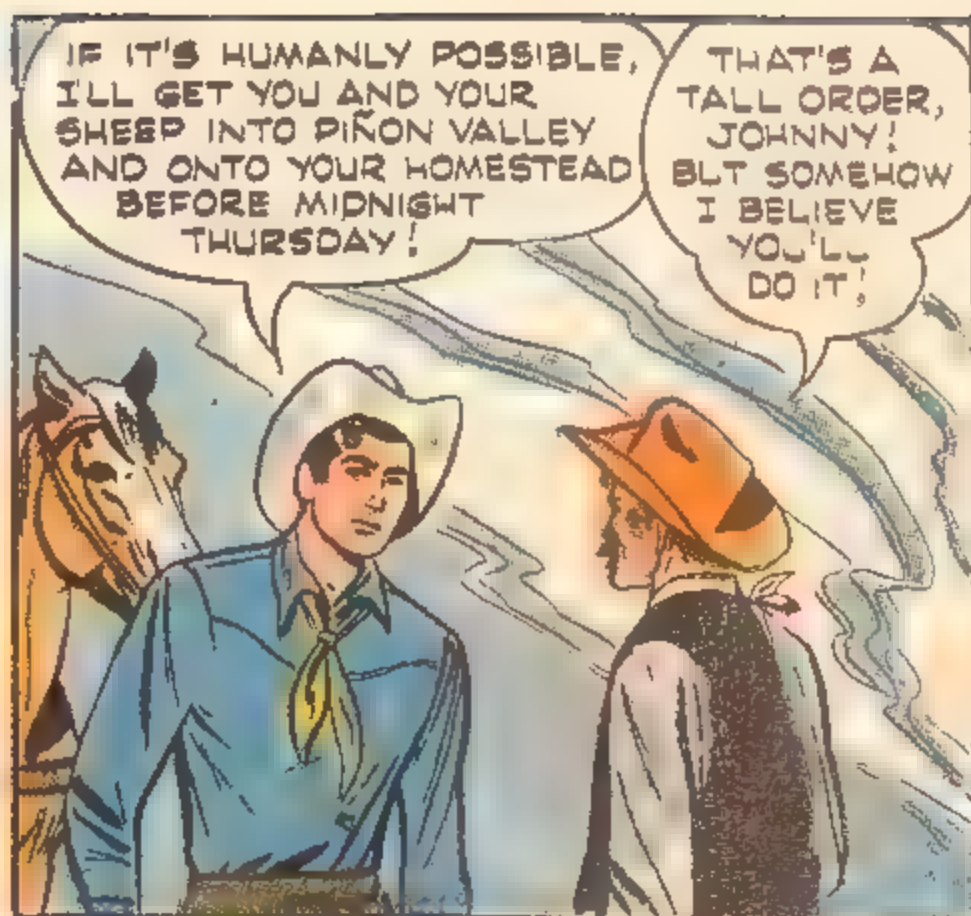
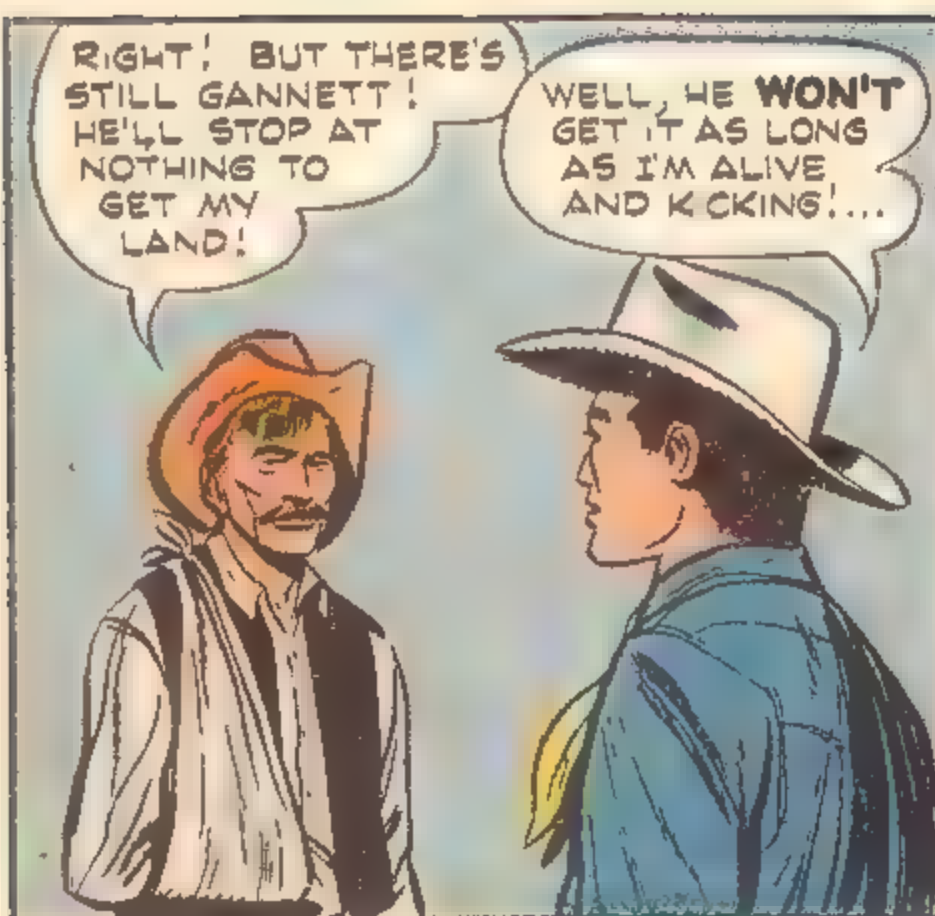


THE RAGING PRAIRIE FIRE
ROARS UP TO THE AREA
WHICH JOHNNY HAS BURNED
OFF AND WITHOUT FUEL,
BEGINS TO DIE...

THAT D.D IT, JOHNNY!
YOUR BACKFIRE
SAVED THE BUNCH
OF US!

IT D DNT SAVE THE GRASS,
THOUGH! SO I RECKON WE CAN
BED DOWN HERE TONIGHT
WITHOUT WORRYING ABOUT
ANOTHER FIRE!



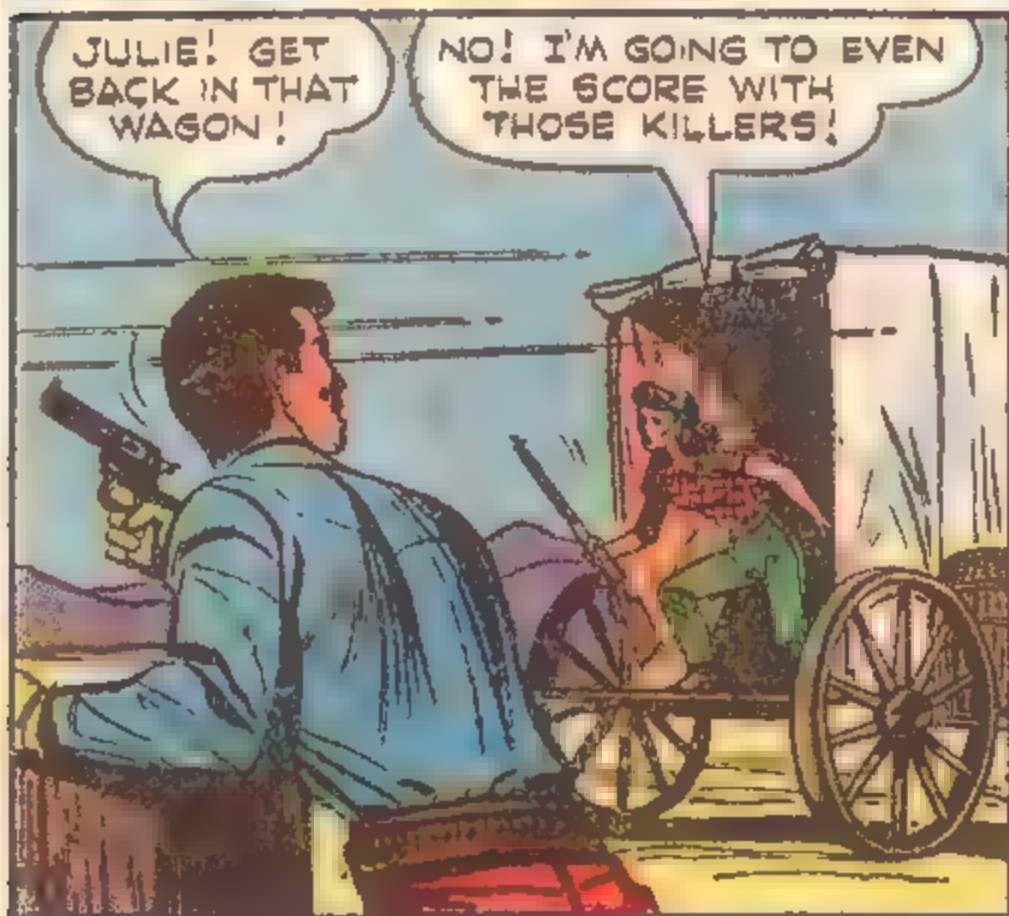
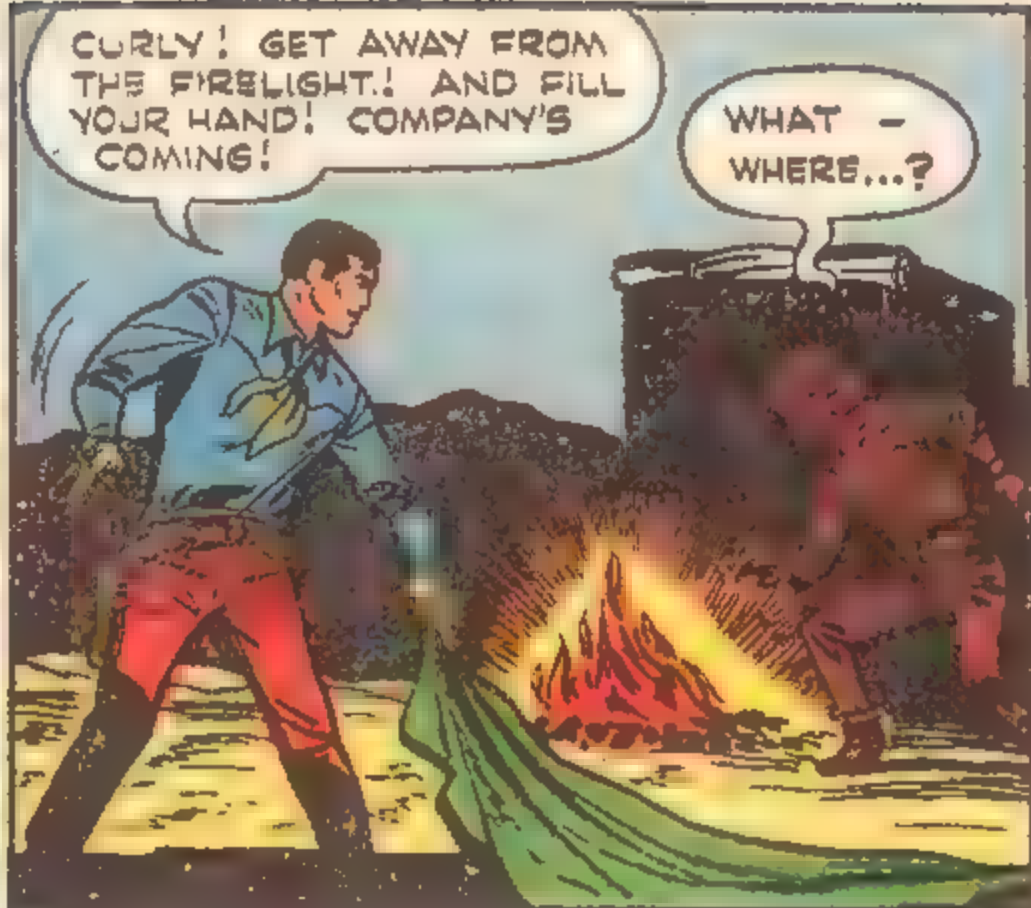


GANNETT AND HIS GANG MOVE SILENTLY TOWARD THE SLEEPING CAMP...



...BUT JOHNNY IS SLEEPING WITH HIS EAR AGAINST THE GROUND...



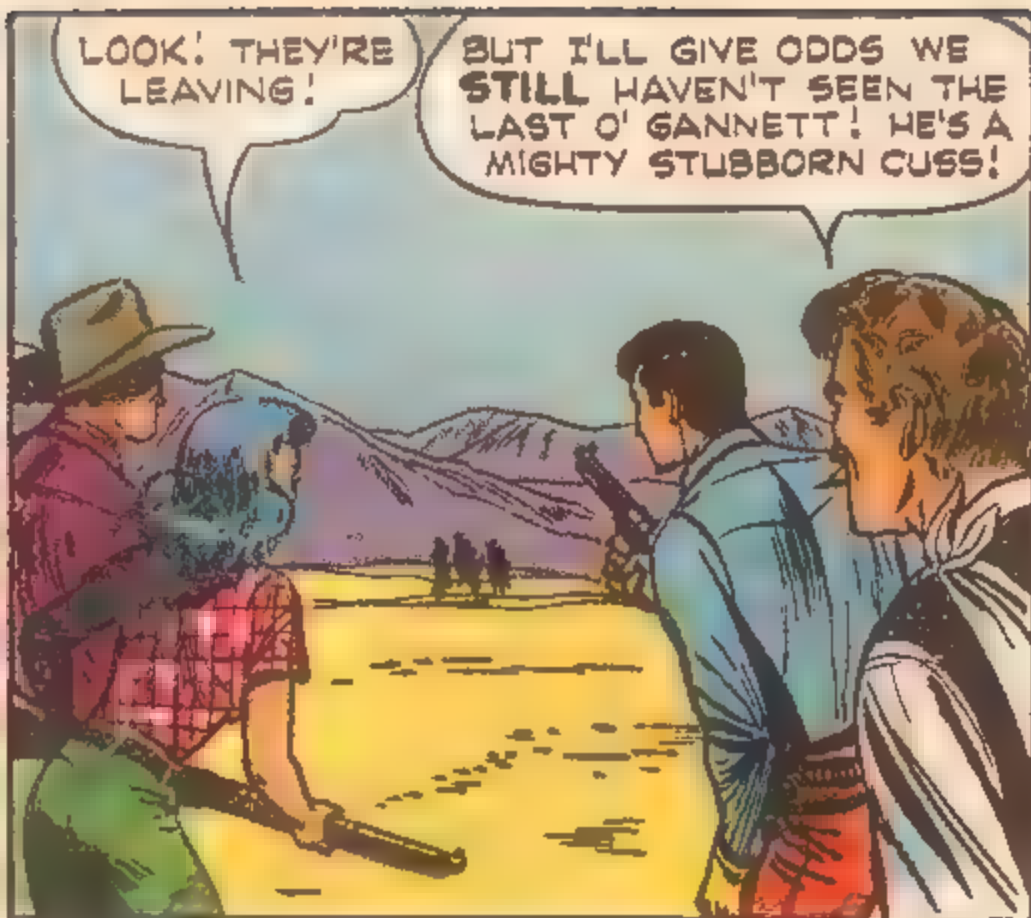




JOE!
WAIT!

NOTHIN DOIN!
THAT SHOT BUSTED
MY ARM! I'M
LIGHTIN' OUT!

ME,
TOO!

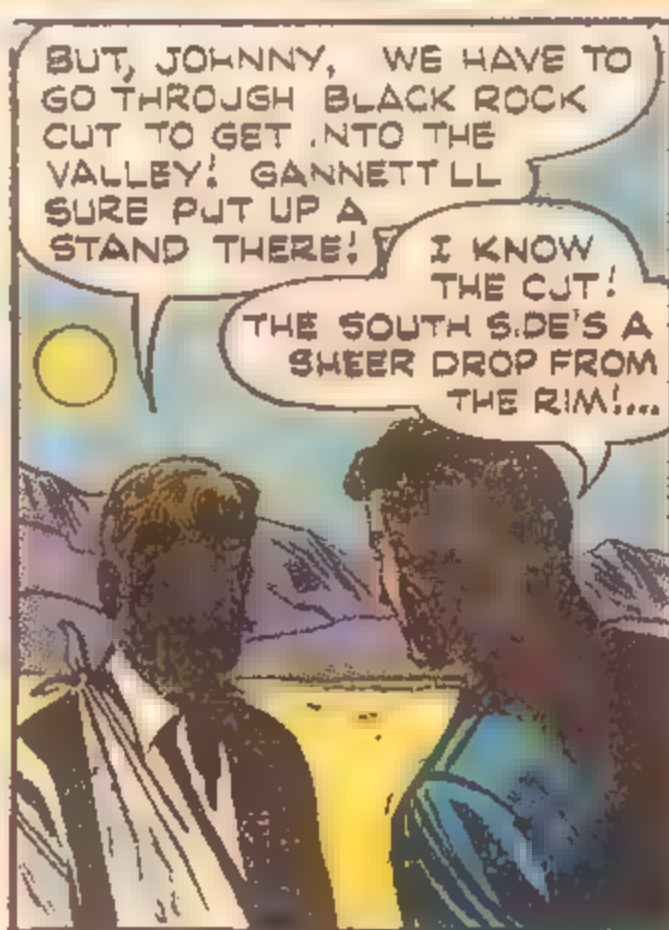


LOOK! THEY'RE
LEAVING!

BUT I'LL GIVE ODDS WE
STILL HAVEN'T SEEN THE
LAST O' GANNETT! HE'S A
MIGHTY STUBBORN CUSS!



DON'T WORRY...THAT
POLECAT WON'T GET
YOUR LAND AS LONG
AS I'M AROUND!



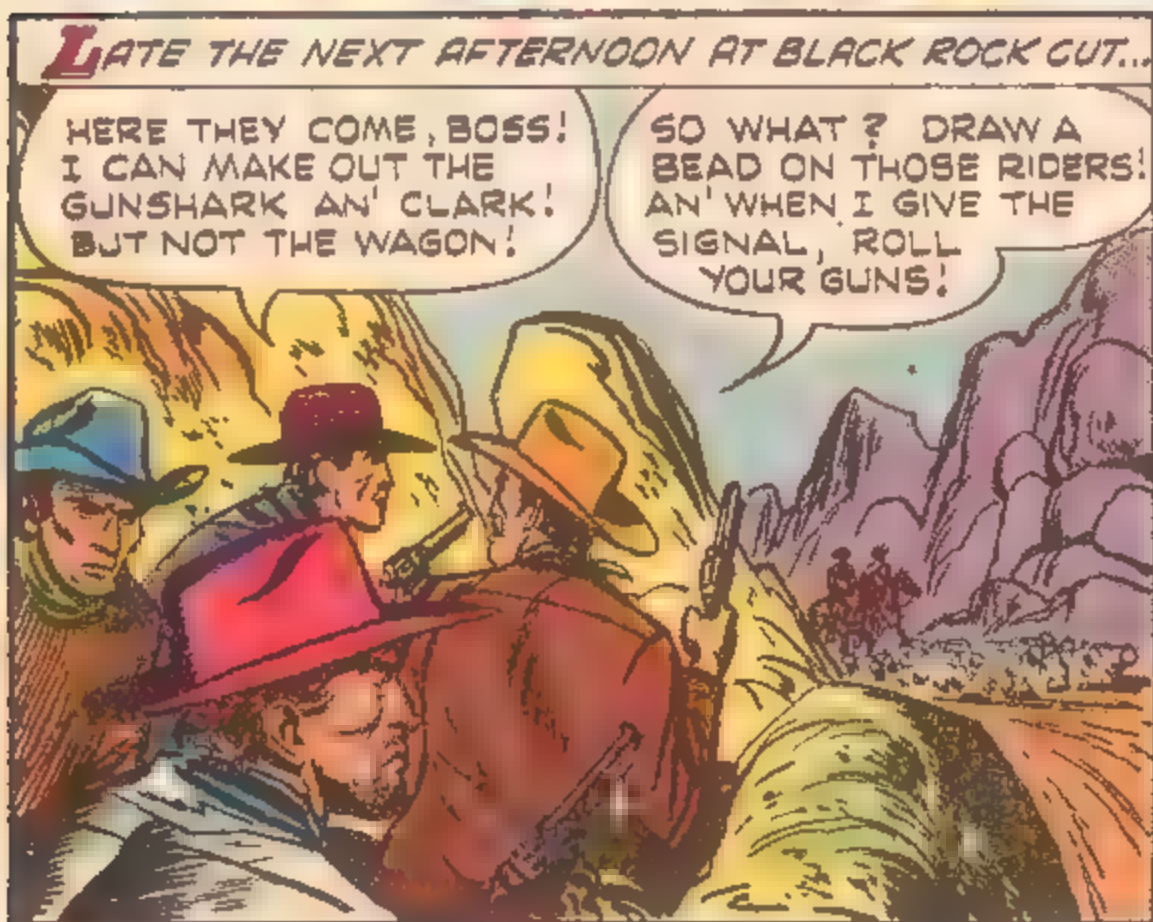
BUT, JOHNNY, WE HAVE TO
GO THROUGH BLACK ROCK
CUT TO GET INTO THE
VALLEY! GANNETT'LL
SURE PUT UP A
STAND THERE!

I KNOW
THE CUT!

THE SOUTH SIDE'S A
SHEER DROP FROM
THE RIM!...



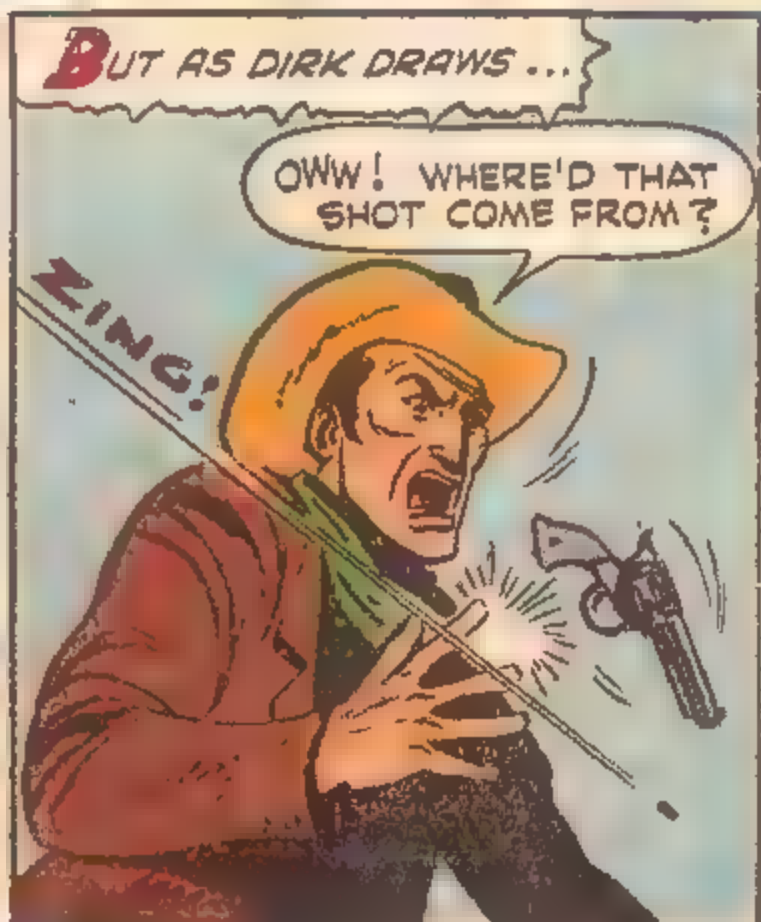
ANY AMBUSH WILL HAVE
TO BE SET ON THE NORTH
SIDE! AS I RECALL, A
ROCK PINNACLE COMMANDS
THAT SIDE! SO WHEN WE
GET NEAR THE CUT...



LATE THE NEXT AFTERNOON AT BLACK ROCK CUT...

HERE THEY COME, BOSS!
I CAN MAKE OUT THE
GUNSHARK AN' CLARK!
BUT NOT THE WAGON!

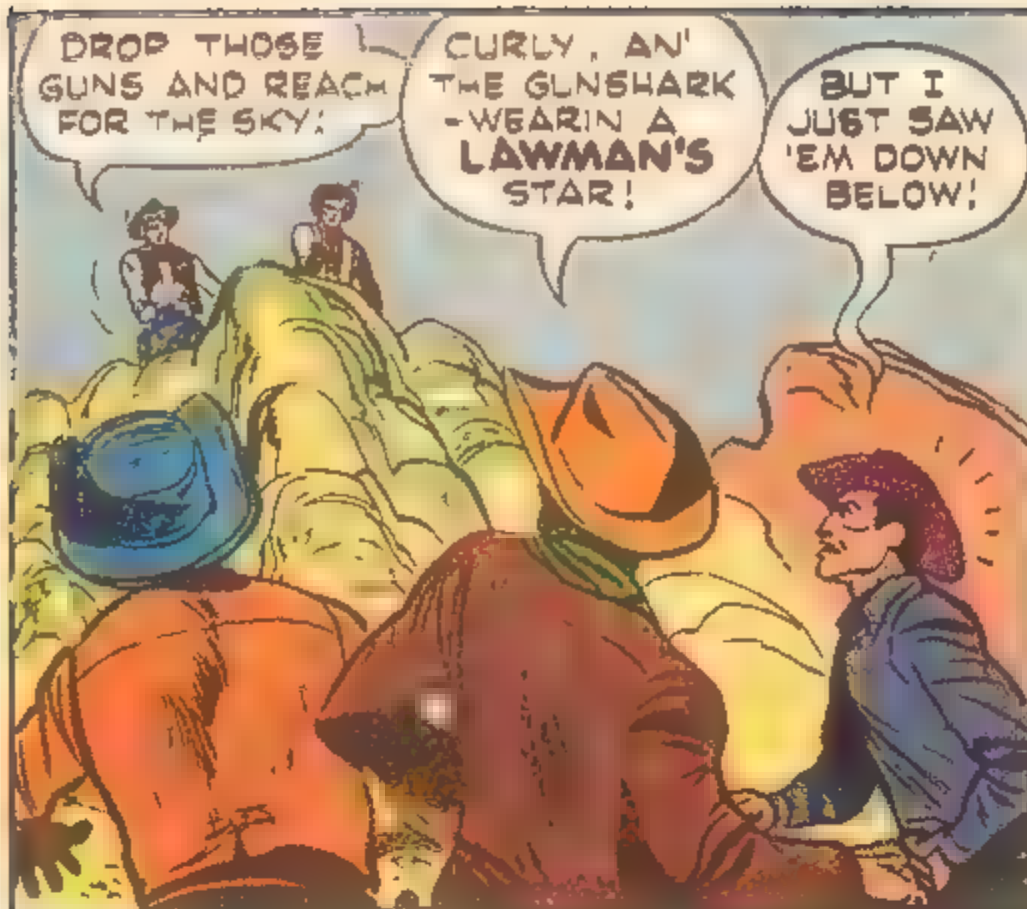
SO WHAT? DRAW A
BEAD ON THOSE RIDERS!
AN' WHEN I GIVE THE
SIGNAL, ROLL
YOUR GUNS!



BUT AS DIRK DRAWS...

OWW! WHERE'D THAT
SHOT COME FROM?

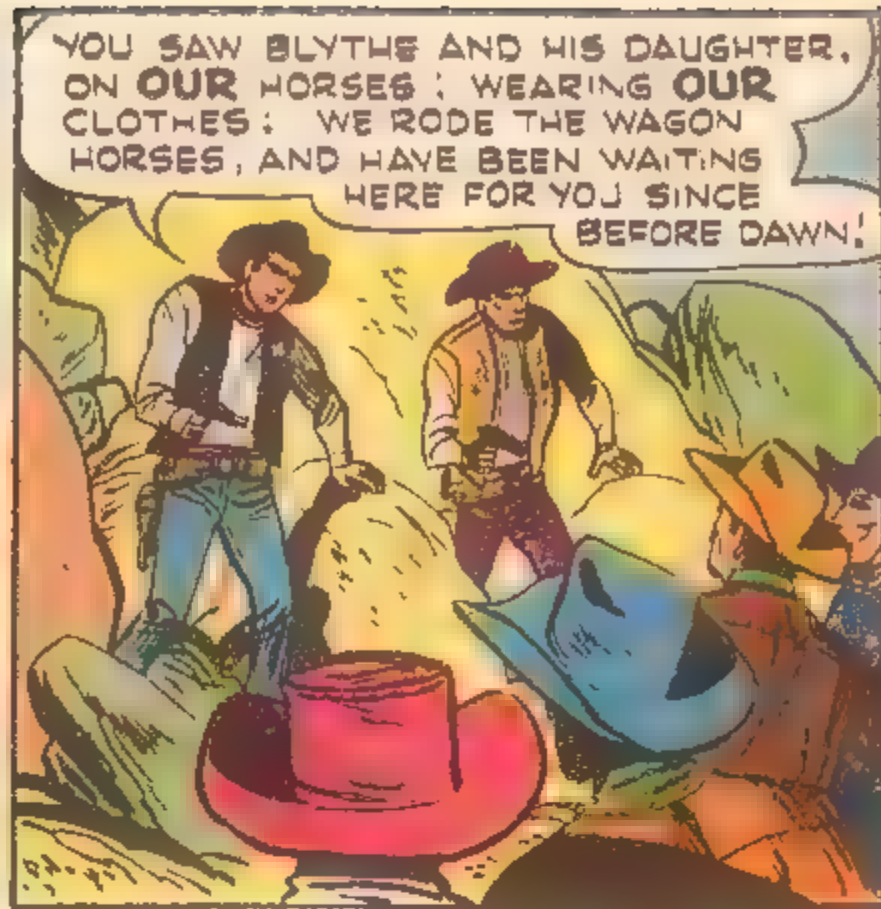
ZING!



DROP THOSE GUNS AND REACH FOR THE SKY!

CURLY, AN' THE GUNSHARK -WEARIN A **LAWMAN'S** STAR!

BUT I JUST SAW 'EM DOWN BELOW!



YOU SAW BLYTHE AND HIS DAUGHTER, ON **OUR** HORSES: WEARING **OUR** CLOTHES: WE RODE THE WAGON HORSES, AND HAVE BEEN WAITING HERE FOR YOU SINCE BEFORE DAWN!



NOW ELEVATE- AND FAST.

YOU'RE NOT TAKIN' **ME** IN!



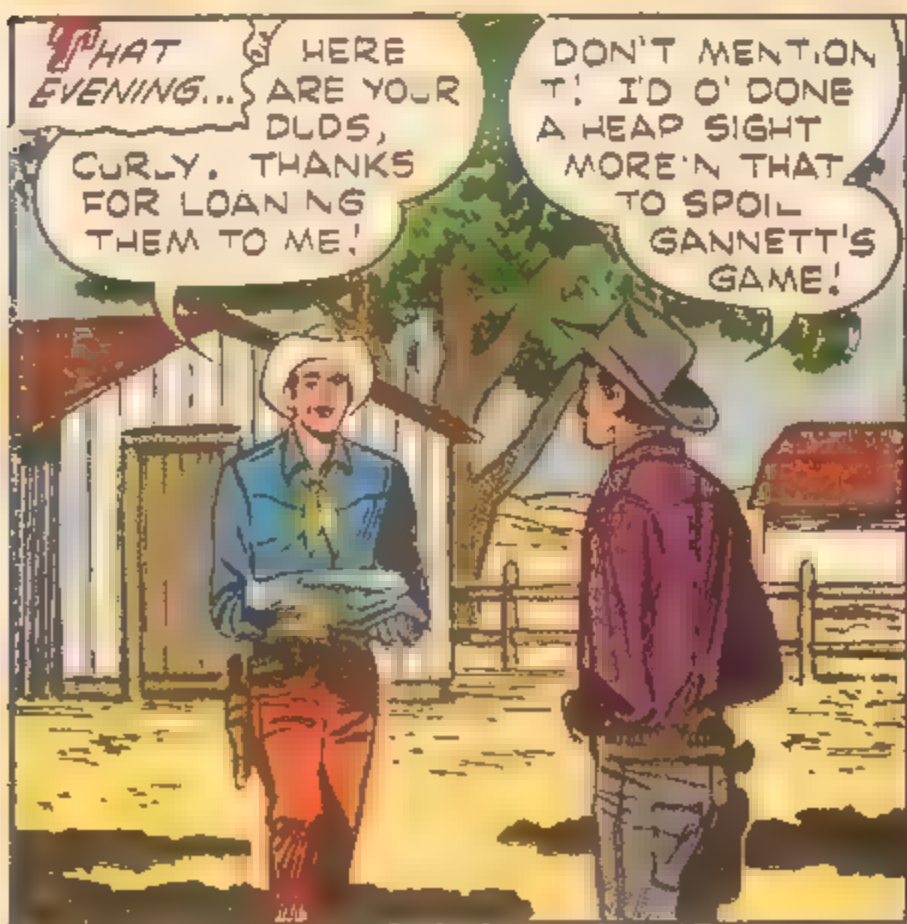
JOHNNY RISKS A DARING SHOT...



...AND IT PAYS OFF...

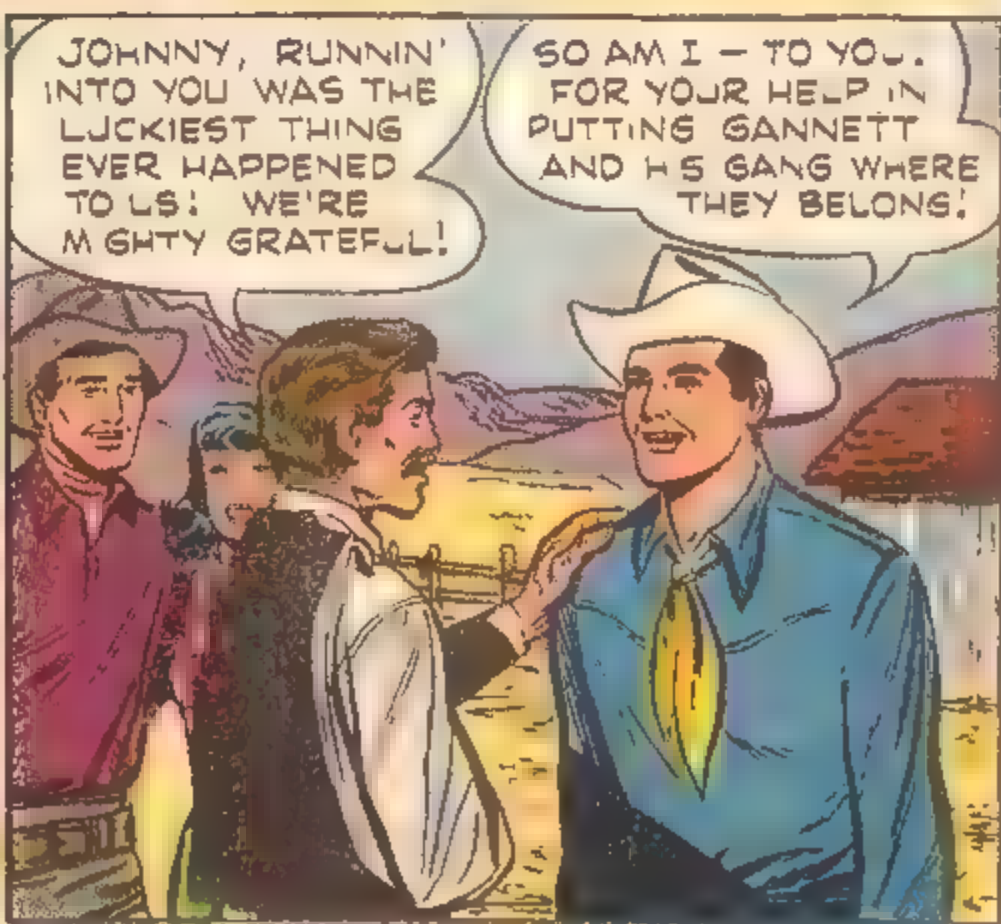
WHAT A SHOT! YOU KNOCKED THE HEEL CLEAN OFF HIS BOOT.

CLEAN OFF HIS **FEET**, YOU MEAN.



THAT EVENING... HERE ARE YOUR DUDS, CURLY. THANKS FOR LOANING THEM TO ME!

DON'T MENTION IT! I'D O'DONE A HEAP SIGHT MORE'N THAT TO SPOIL GANNETT'S GAME!



JOHNNY, RUNNIN' INTO YOU WAS THE LUCKIEST THING EVER HAPPENED TO US! WE'RE MIGHTY GRATEFUL!

SO AM I - TO YOU. FOR YOUR HELP IN PUTTING GANNETT AND HIS GANG WHERE THEY BELONG!



At the sound of the footsteps, the bearded man with wind-reddened eyes ducked behind the trunk of a giant pine. Here he waited tensely, fingers gripping his six-gun.

The footsteps came nearer . . . rounded a high hummock...and the bearded man choked back a chuckle. The maker of the footsteps was only a freckle-faced, snub-nosed boy. Around the boy's head was an Indian headband, decorated with two eagle feathers.

The bearded man waited until the boy was well past the giant pine. Then, with the stealth of all hunted creatures, he followed the lad. Wherever the boy was headed, there was sure to be food, water, and shelter. Perhaps even money.

* * *

Matt Wheeler fought the gusty wind for control of the back door and slammed into the warm kitchen redolent with the spiciness of a hot apple pie which Laura was just taking from the oven.

"Blowin' up cold," said Matt, ringing the higher of two wall pegs with his battered hat. "Reckon winter's on the way."

His daughter, pretty in a blue gingham dress, stiffened, but she took no other notice of his words. Setting the pie to one side, she began to stir some stew in a large iron pot.

Matt stifled a sigh and, stepping to the sink, started to wash up. His thoughts were on Laura. Why couldn't she be happy here? Goodness knows, she had not been happy back East. After her husband's death, she and Teddy had nearly starved before he'd found out and sent for them. True, they were not

wealthy now, but his diggin's provided enough and a little over. And, some day, maybe he'd hit a pocket of nuggets. He'd thought things would work out with Laura, but he guessed they never would. If she'd only try to adjust, to make friends. Teddy had done both.

As if in answer to his thinking the boy's name, Matt heard a whistle and light, running footsteps. Then the kitchen door banged open and slammed shut behind a smiling, freckle-faced, snub-nosed boy.

"Teddy Marlin! Take off that horrible headband!"

Laura's words banished Teddy's smile. Removing the headband, he hung it carefully on the lower wall peg.

"Outside!" snapped Laura.

"But the wind'll break the feathers," said Teddy, "and White Bear had an awf'ly hard time getting them for me."

"Outside!" Laura repeated.

Teddy flashed his grandfather a pleading look, but before Matt could speak, Laura turned on him.

"Don't say it, Pop!" Her voice and eyes were angry.

"I've gotta!" Matt declared. "Just 'cause you've got a hate on against the Indians ain't no sign Teddy's gotta feel the same way. Besides, this is his home. He's got a right to keep a present from his friend—"

"Don't call that dirty old Indian his 'friend'!" interrupted Laura.

"Mom!" Teddy protested, "White Bear's old — that's for sure. But he isn't dirty — not very dirty, anyway. And he's taught

me an awful lot. How not to get lost in the woods, and how to build different kinds of fires, and today—" He broke off as Laura stalked across the kitchen, snatched the headband from the peg, and headed for the back door.

As she reached the door, it opened. And the doorway framed the bearded man — and his gun.

"Stub Sloan!" gasped Matt.

The door closed behind the bearded man. "How come you know my name, old-timer?"

"Saw your picture on a reward poster," replied Matt.

"So did I," said Teddy. "The printing underneath said you'd killed three men."

"Four," corrected Sloan with a wry grin. Pulling a chair to him, he sprawled down into it and flourished his gun at Laura. "Get back to your cookin', woman," he barked. "I'm powerful hungry."

Laura dropped the headband into Teddy's lap, saying, "Too bad your Indian 'friend' didn't teach you how to handle a situation like this."

"Maybe he did," said Teddy — under his breath.

Sloan glared at Matt. "Hand over your gun!" When Matt tossed the gun on the table, Sloan drew it to him with his left hand and tucked it in his belt. He kept his own gun trained on Laura who had returned to the stove. "Any more guns in the house?" Sloan included Teddy in the question.

Teddy nodded. "A rifle — in my room."

"Get it!" Sloan ordered. "But no tricks, or your Ma—"

"I understand," said Teddy, and left the room.

When Teddy returned, he had the rifle but not the headband. At Sloan's directing nod, he stood the rifle nearby, then went to the stove and looked up at Laura. "It's kinda chilly in the rest of the house, Mom. Hadn't I better make a fire in the front room?"

Laura turned to Sloan. "Any objections?"

The outlaw shook his head. "Not if he don't leave the house, but if he does..."

Teddy glanced at the gun trained on his mother. "No danger of that." He smiled at Laura — and again left the room.

Fifteen minutes passed during which the

wind died down; "snow afore mornin'," thought Matt when he realized it. Laura dished up a plateful of stew which Sloan, using a spoon and his left hand, noisily consumed. Now and then, sounds came from the front room... the thud of falling wood... the clang of a poker.

Matt frowned puzzledly. What in tarnation was taking Teddy so long? "He's up to something," Matt told himself. "But hanged if I can figure out what!"

Five more minutes went by. Somewhere in the gathering darkness, an owl hooted. A moment later, Teddy returned to the kitchen to sit, tensely, on the corner stool.

Sloan did not seem to notice the boy's return. He consumed a second helping of stew and was starting on a huge wedge of apple pie when the back door flew open. Turning at the sound, Sloan found himself looking into the muzzles of three guns — each held by an Indian brave. Matt recognized the middle Indian; he was White Bear.

It seemed but seconds before Sloan was disarmed, roped, and led out by two of the braves, who would take him to town and the sheriff.

When the door closed on them, Laura looked at Teddy. "I don't understand, son."

Teddy grinned. "It's simple, Mom. Today, White Bear taught me some smoke signals. I said I'd practice them when I got home, so he said he'd be watching."

"When me see signal for help," White Bear said, "me come fast. Boy promise not send that signal unless in big trouble."

Matt grinned at Teddy. "That's why you took so long buildin' the fire!"

Nodding, Teddy looked apologetically at Laura. "I'm afraid I ruined my jacket, Mom, slappin' it over the fire. But there's a big reward for Stub Sloan and —"

Laura's eyes shone with tears, but her voice was gay as she interrupted. "And after you divide it with White Bear, there'll be plenty left over for a dozen jackets!" She held out her hand to the old Indian. "I hope you'll let me be your friend, too, from now on, White Bear!"

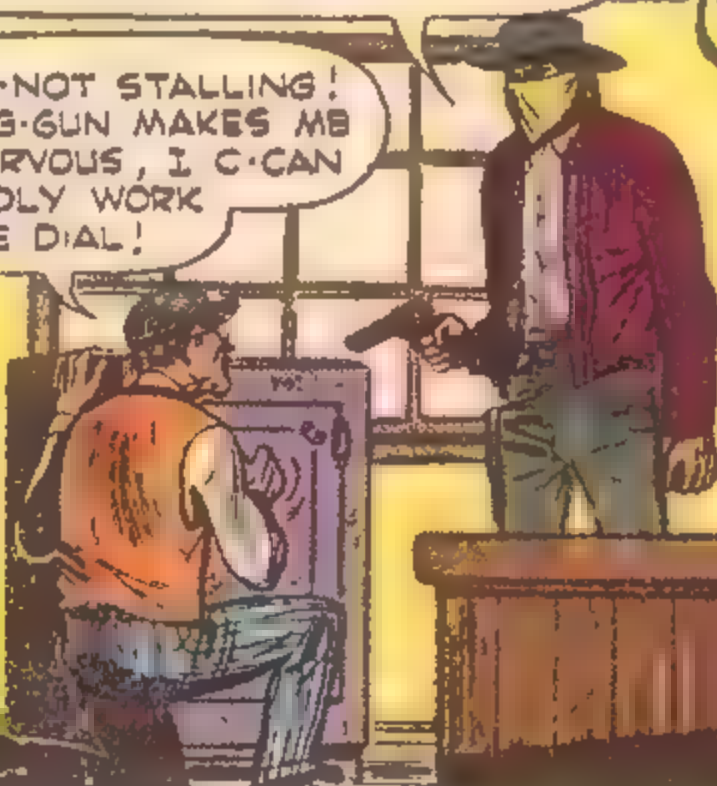
Matt smiled to himself. He wondered what Stub Sloan would say if he knew how he'd helped things to work out for three people on the right side of the law.

Ace meets his match...

ONE MORNING, SAM DONLEY, AGENT OF RIMROD RAILROAD STATION, HAS AN UNWELCOME CALLER...

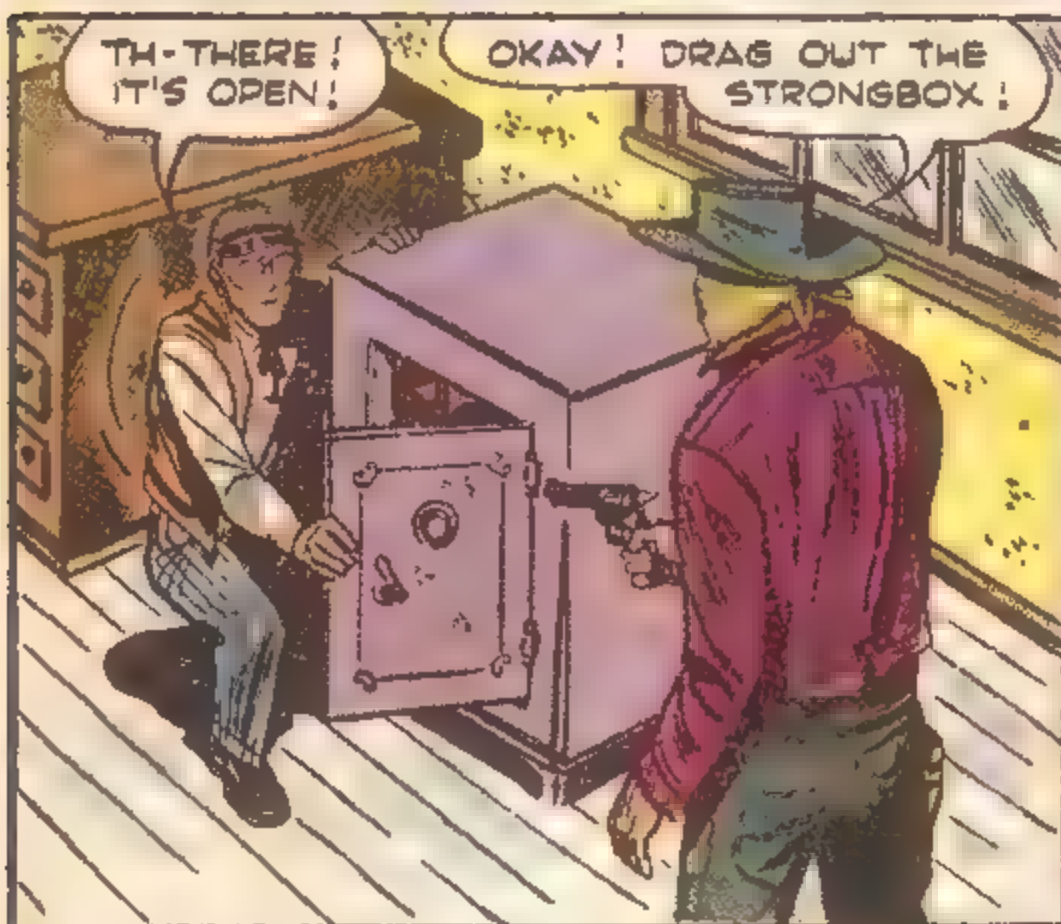
LISTEN, OLD-TIMER! IF YOU DON'T QUIT STALLIN' AN' OPEN THAT SAFE...

I'M N-NOT STALLING! YOUR G-GUN MAKES ME SO NERVOUS, I C-CAN HARDLY WORK THE DIAL!



TH-THERE! IT'S OPEN!

OKAY! DRAG OUT THE STRONGBOX!



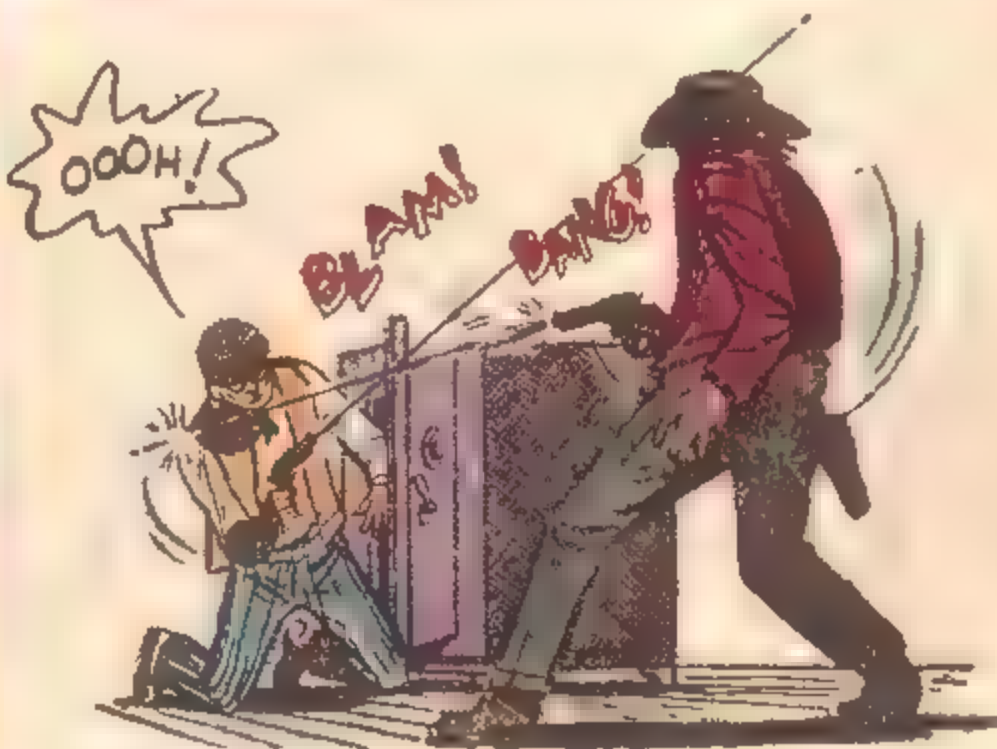
BUT SAM REACHES FOR A GUN INSTEAD!



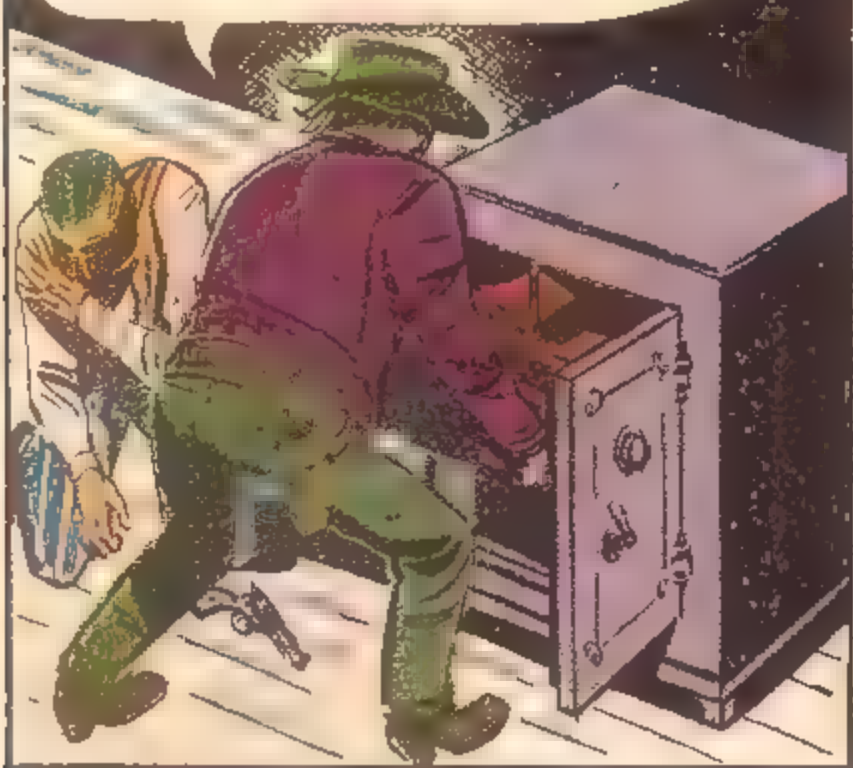
YOU BLASTED SIDEWINDER! I AIN'T NERVOUS NOW!



TWO GUNS BLAZE, BUT ONLY ONE BULLET FINDS ITS MARK...

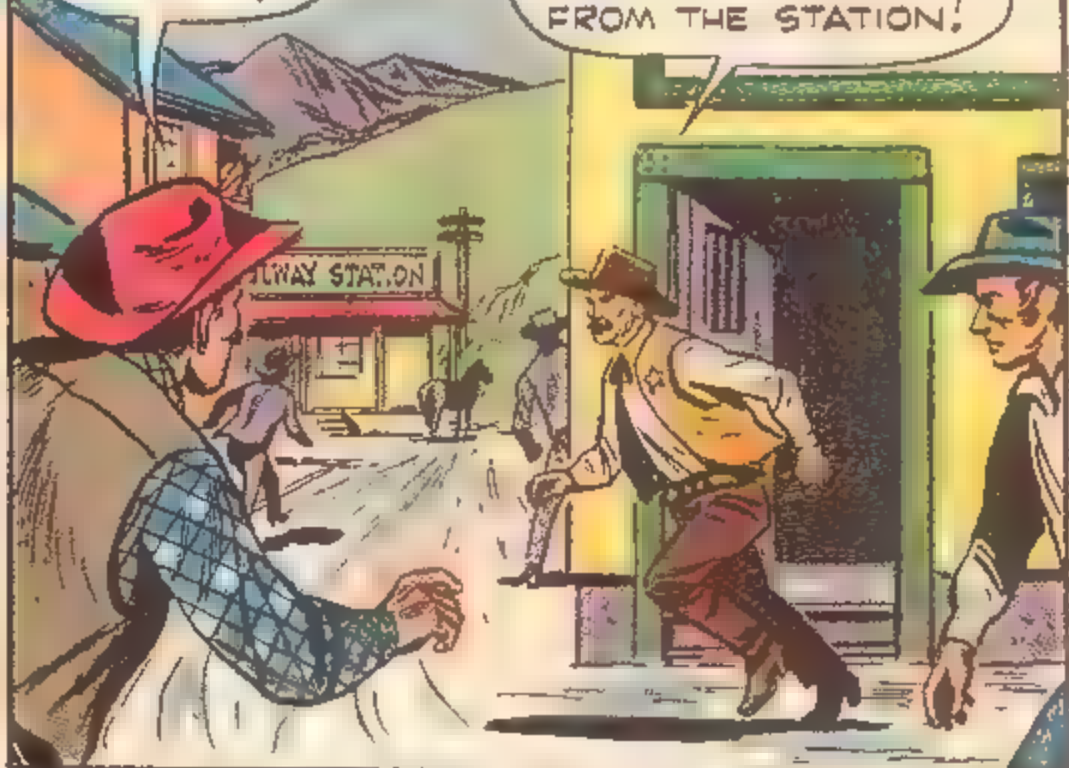


THOSE SHOTS'LL BRING THE WHOLE TOWN. BUT I'M NOT LEAVIN WITHOUT THIS CASH!



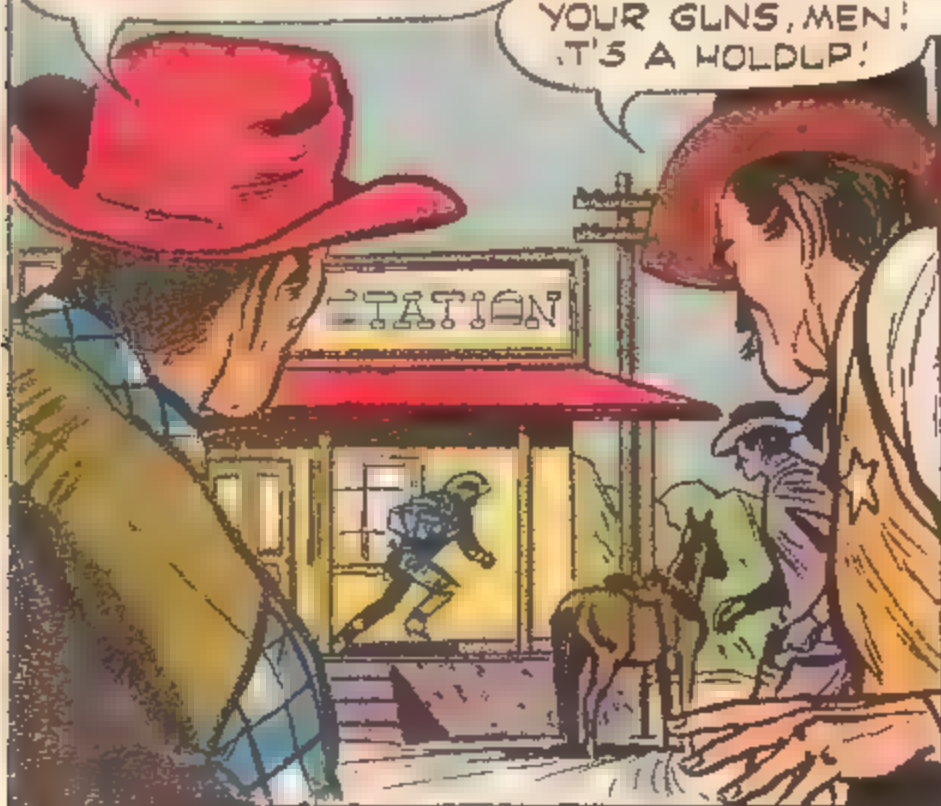
SHERIFF! WHAT'S ALL THE SHOOTIN' ABOUT?

DON'T KNOW, JOE: THE SHOTS SOUNDED LIKE THEY CAME FROM THE STATION!



THEY SURE D.D! LOOK! A MASKED HOMBRE!

AND HE'S CARRYING A STRONGBOX! ROLL YOUR GUNS, MEN! IT'S A HOLDUP!



HANG IT! MISSED HIM!



JOE! YOU CHECK ON SAM! THE REST OF YOU MOUNT YOUR HORSES FAST!

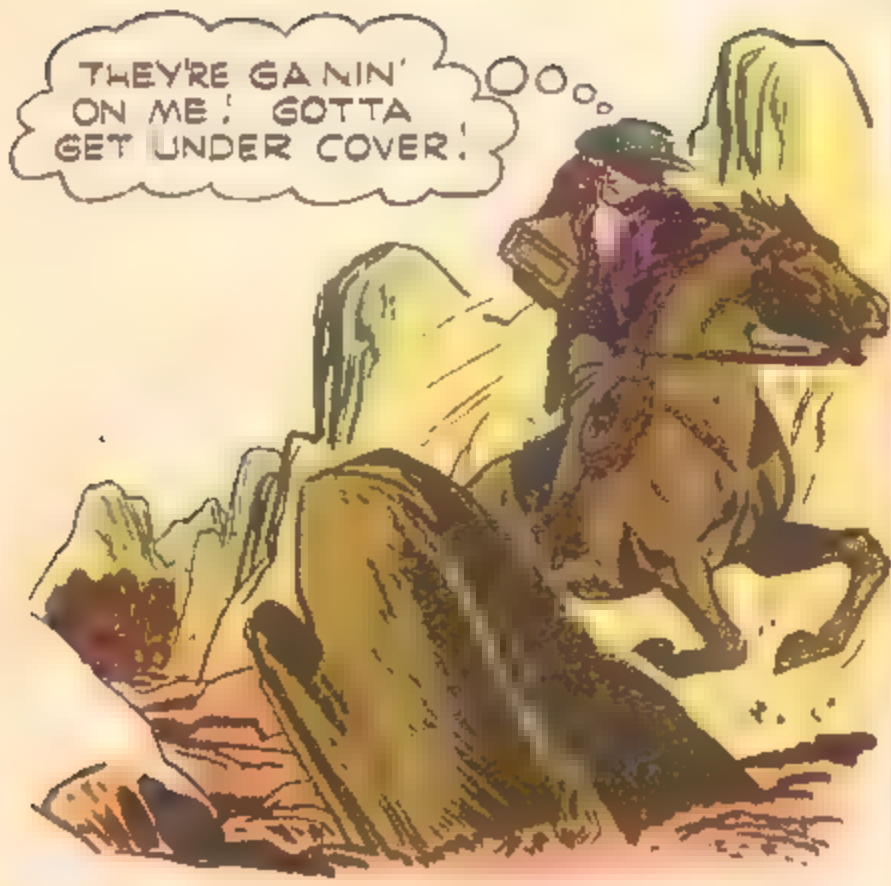


MOMENTS LATER...

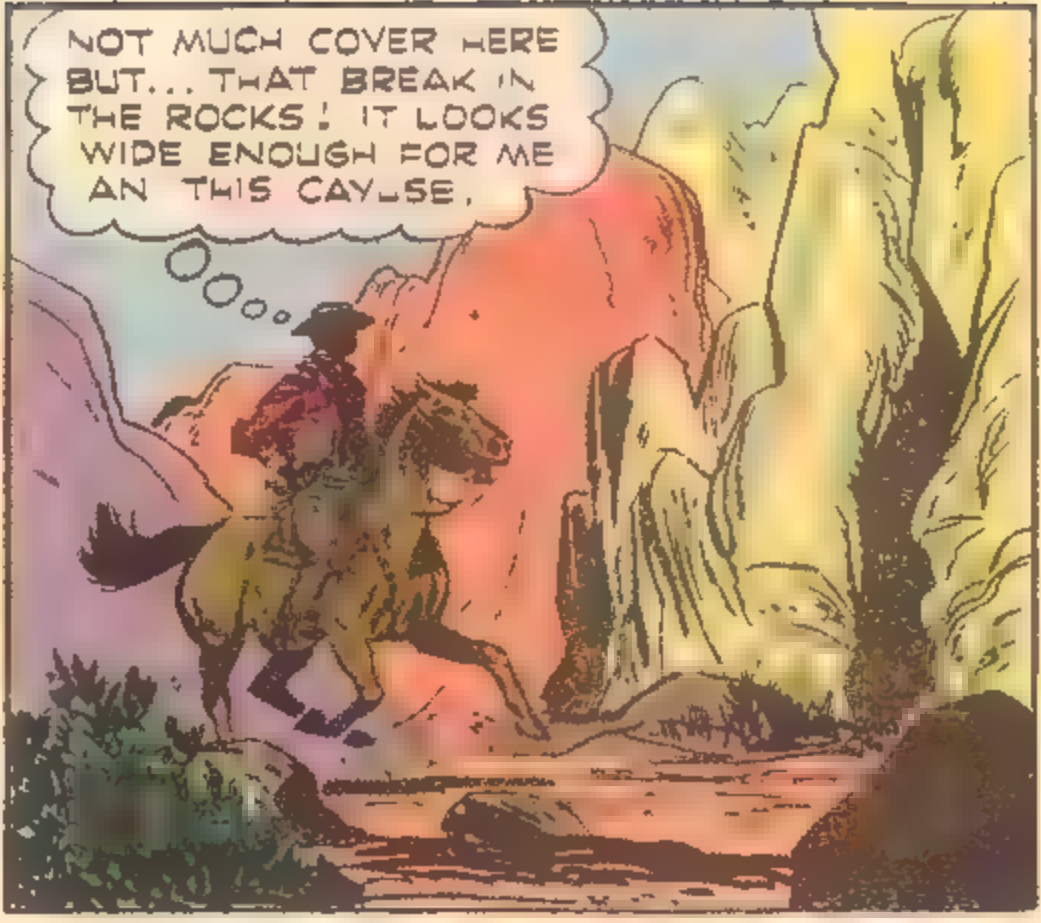
SHERIFF! SAM'S NOT HURT TOO BAD! HE'LL BE OKAY!

GOOD! NOW, LET'S MOVE, MEN! THAT POLECAT'S HEADED FOR MULEBACK RIDGE!

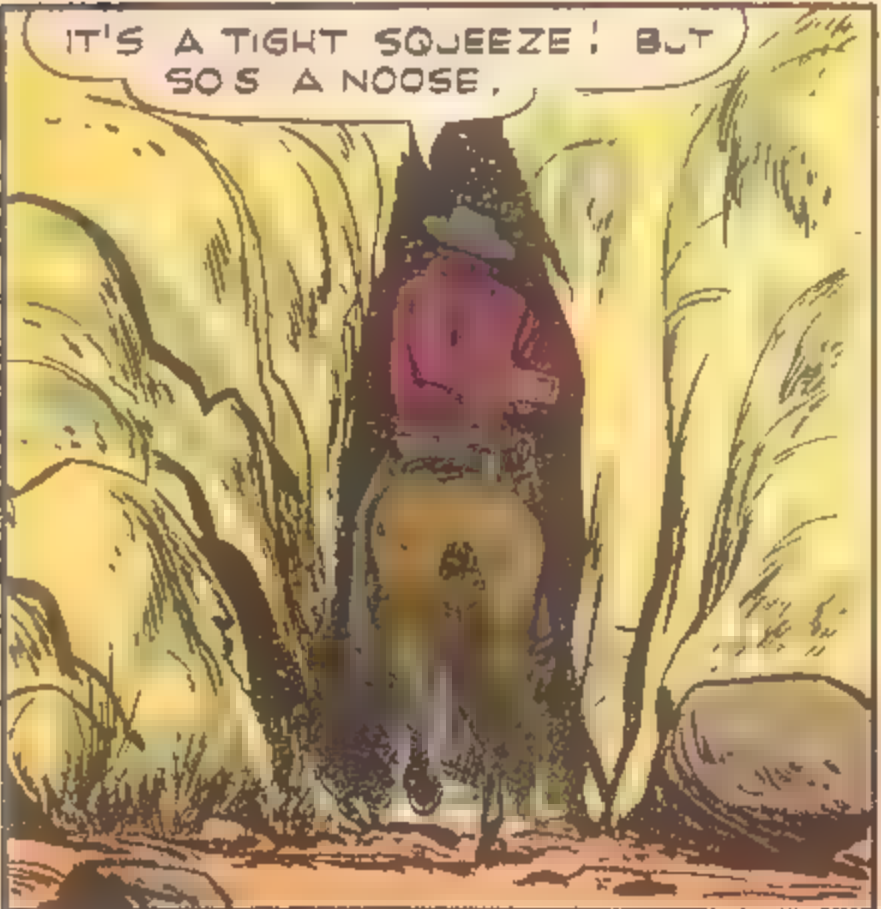




THEY'RE GAININ' ON ME! GOTTA GET UNDER COVER!



NOT MUCH COVER HERE BUT... THAT BREAK IN THE ROCKS! IT LOOKS WIDE ENOUGH FOR ME AN' THIS CAYLSE.



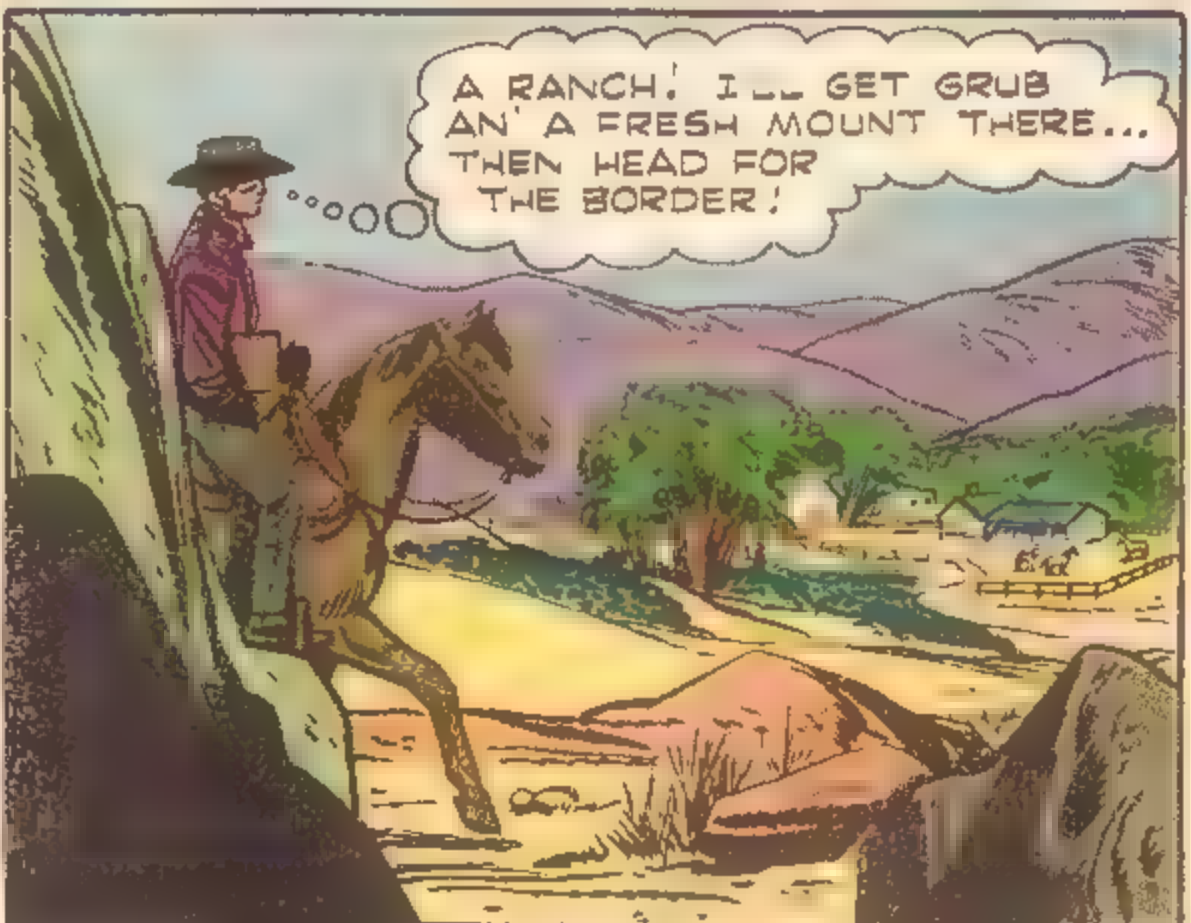
IT'S A TIGHT SQUEEZE! BUT SO'S A NOOSE.



THERE THEY GO, THE CROCKHEADS! RECKON NOBODY IN **THIS** NECK O' THE WOODS CAN GET THE BETTER OF ACE JENNER.



LOOKS LIKE TH'S PASSAGE GOES THROUGH TO THE OTHER SIDE O' THE R DGE! GUESS I'LL FIND OUT FOR **SURE!**



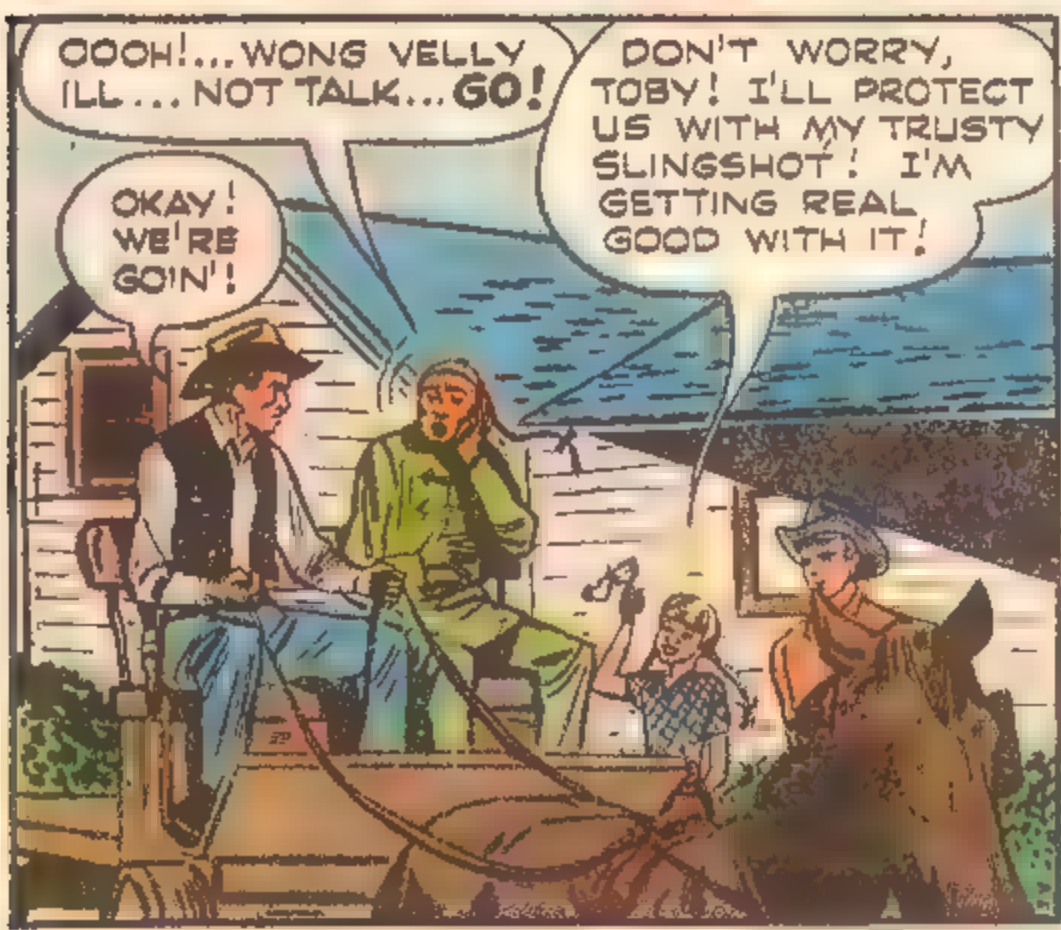
A RANCH! I'LL GET GRUB AN' A FRESH MOUNT THERE... THEN HEAD FOR THE BORDER!



A LITTLE LATER...

Y'KNOW, DAVE, YOUR PA ISN'T GONNA LIKE YOU AN' TRUDY BEIN' LEFT HERE ALONE!

IT'LL ONLY BE TILL THE BOYS COME IN FROM THE RANGE, TOBY! AND WONG'S REAL SICK! HE'S GOT TO GET TO THE DOCTOR!



OOOH!...WONG VELLY ILL...NOT TALK...**GO!**

OKAY! WE'RE GOIN'!

DON'T WORRY, TOBY! I'LL PROTECT US WITH MY TRUSTY SLINGSHOT! I'M GETTING REAL GOOD WITH IT!



WHAT A SETUP! ONLY **TWO** KIDS TO HANDLE!

...SEE?

???

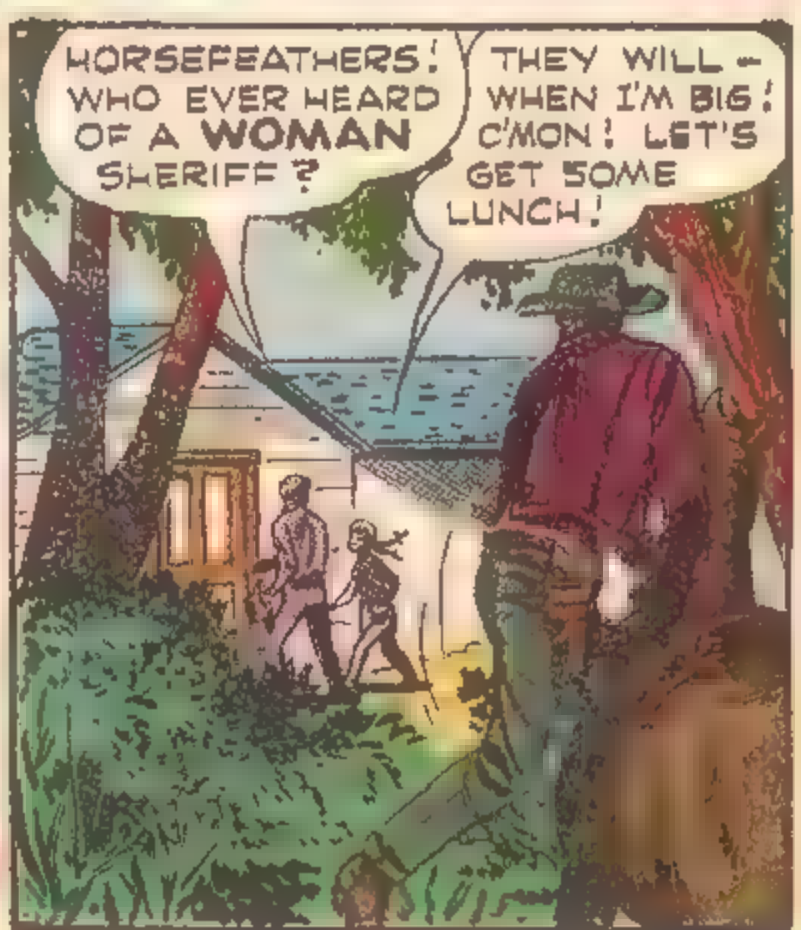


DOGGONIT, TRUDY! DAD MUST'VE BEEN LOCO TO GIVE YOU THAT SLINGSHOT!

BUT I'M NOT OLD ENOUGH FOR A **GUN!**



AND AS I'M GOING TO BE A SHERIFF WHEN I GROW UP, MAYBE HE FIGURED IT WOULD HELP ME DEVELOP MY AIM!



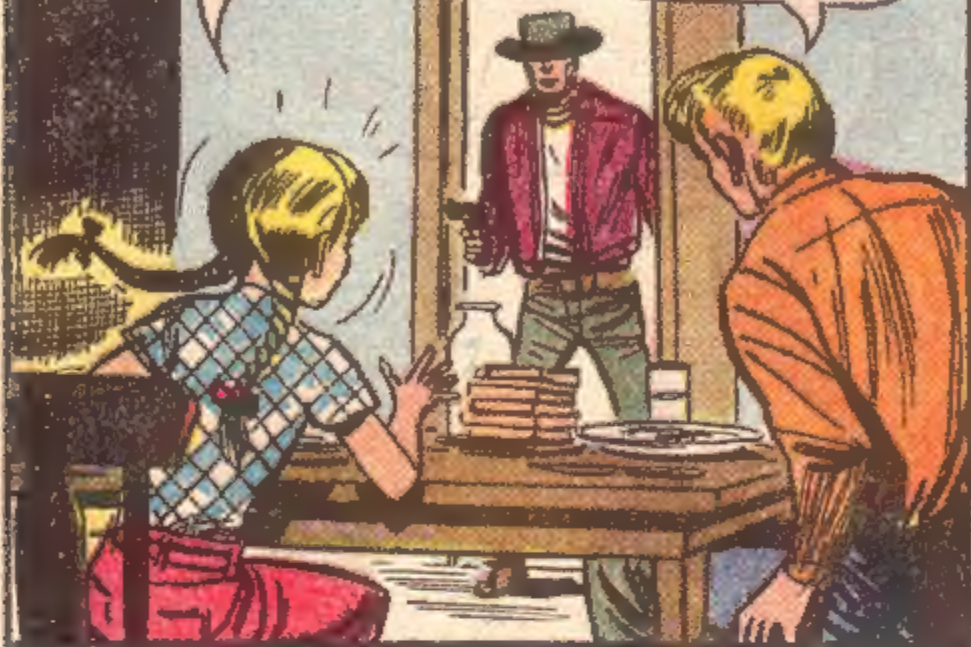
HORSEFEATHERS! WHO EVER HEARD OF A **WOMAN** SHERIFF?

THEY WILL - WHEN I'M BIG! C'MON! LET'S GET SOME LUNCH!

A FEW MINUTES LATER...

DAVE! LOOK!
A REAL LIVE
GUNSLINGER!

WHO ARE YOU,
MISTER? AND
WHAT DO
YOU WANT?

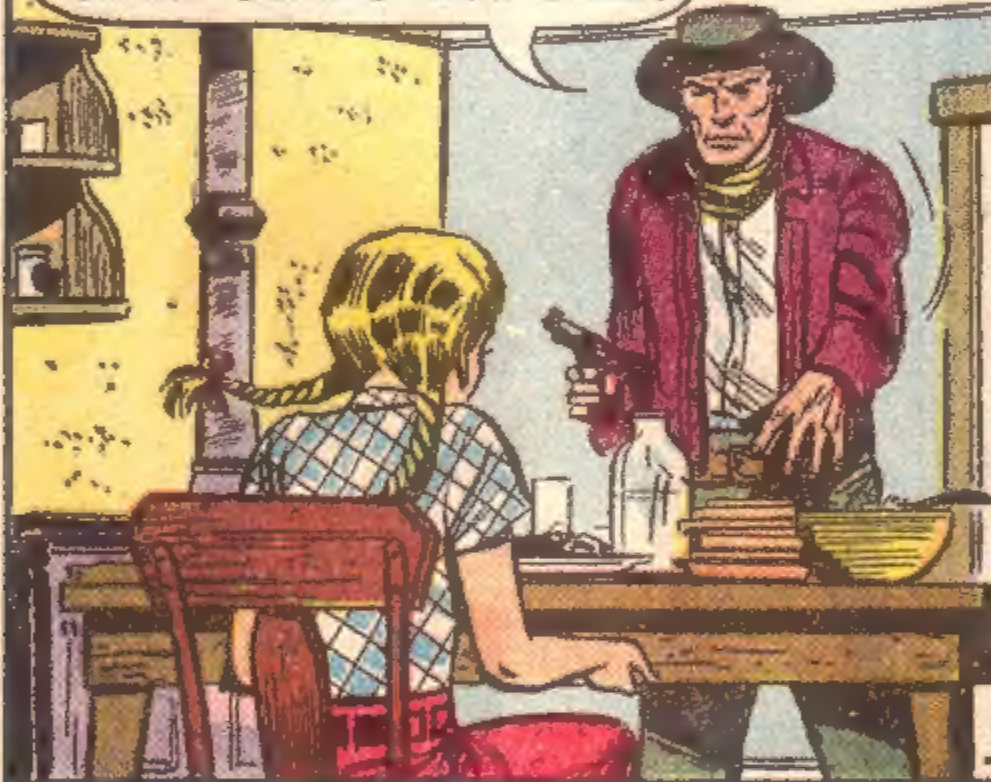


MY NAME DON'T MATTER!
JUST HAND OVER SOME
FOOD, AN' THAT BLAZE-
FACED BAY IN THE
CORRAL!

GINGER?
HE'S MY
HORSE!
YOU CAN'T
TAKE HIM!



THIS SHOOTIN' IRON SAYS I CAN...
AN' WILL, SISTER! NOW,
GIMME SOME O' THAT GRUB!



TAKE IT **ALL!** -
DAVE!
SOCK HIM!



WHOOPEE!
RIGHT IN THE
BREADBASKET!

OOOFF!



DAVE'S AWFUL GOOD WITH HIS
FISTS! BUT HE'S NO MATCH
FOR THAT COYOTE!

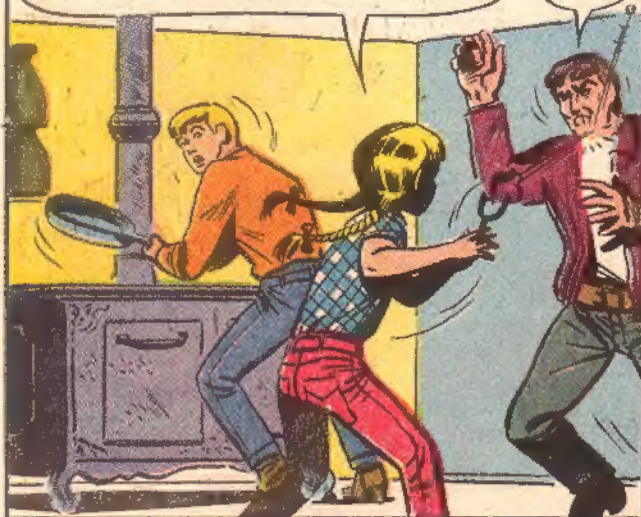


SO I RECKON I'LL HAVE TO
LEND HIM A HAND!



THEN GET THE SKILLET! HURRY!
I'M RUNNING OUT OF STONES!

YOW!



LATER...

I'M FLABBERGASTED!
YOU KIDS CAPTURING
ACE JENNER - WANTED IN SIX
STATES - WITH BARE PISTS, A
SLINGSHOT, AND AN IRON
SKILLET!

AND
PLENTY OF
TEAMWORK!



YEAH, AN', BELIEVE ME,
IF YOU'RE EVER SHERIFF
I'LL STEER CLEAR OF
YOUR TERRITORY!

OH, I'LL
MAKE IT
ALL RIGHT! I
CAN'T MISS -
WITH A SHERIFF
FOR MY
DAD!



DELL COMICS ARE GOOD COMICS



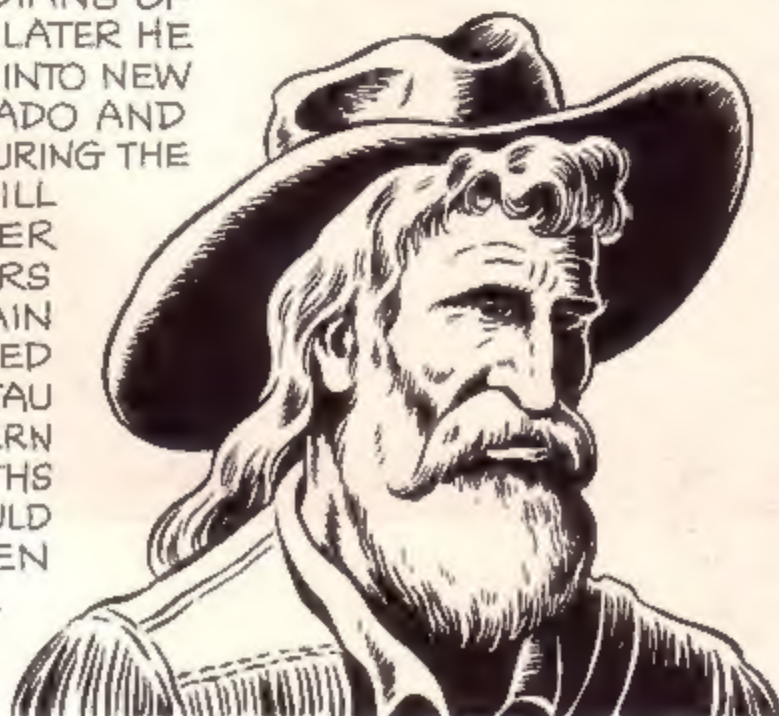
Old Bill Williams

Plainsman, Preacher and Scout

NOBODY IS SURE WHERE OLD BILL CAME FROM AND HIS PASSING IS JUST AS MUCH OF A MYSTERY. HE WAS AT ONE TIME A CIRCUIT RIDING PREACHER IN MISSOURI, BUT QUIT THE MINISTRY AND WENT TO LIVE AMONG THE INDIANS OF THE OSAGE NATION. LATER HE DRIFTED WESTWARD INTO NEW MEXICO AND COLORADO AND JOINED THE UTES. DURING THE SUCCEEDING YEARS BILL TRAPPED FOR BEAVER ALL ALONG THE RIVERS OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN AREA AND THEN DRIFTED INTO THE HIGH PLATEAU COUNTRY OF NORTHERN ARIZONA. FOR MONTHS ON END OLD BILL WOULD TEND HIS TRAPS, THEN WITH THREE OR FOUR

THOUSAND DOLLARS' WORTH OF PELTS IN HIS PACK, HE WOULD RETURN TO TAOS, AND CONVERT HIS TAKE INTO CASH. THERE HE WOULD STAY UNTIL HE WAS BROKE. FEW MEN KNEW THE MOUNTAINS AS WELL AS

BILL. GENERAL FREMONT CHOSE HIM AS HIS GUIDE WHEN HE SET OUT TO CROSS THE SANGRE DE CRISTO MOUNTAINS. CAUGHT IN AN EARLY SNOWFALL, THE PARTY ALMOST PERISHED. FREMONT UNJUSTLY BLAMED BILL FOR THE FAILURE. OLD BILL WAS SORELY HURT. HE LEFT THE COUNTRY AND DISAPPEARED. NOBODY KNOWS WHERE HE WENT. HE NEVER CAME BACK. BUT ARIZONA REMEMBERED. THEY NAMED A MOUNTAIN, A RIVER AND A TOWN AFTER HIM.





LS FA
EXPRES